

The Roots of American Fascism

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

In the twenty-first century, the United States has come to support a fascist regime. If fascism is an ideology, the question is not particularly *how* we got to this point, but rather *what antecedent beliefs* in American history supported this type of thinking? To answer this question, my paper is split into three sections. The first section is an introduction that outlines my argument and properly defines terms that are centered in my argument, which are fascism and imperialism, manifest destiny, nationalism, and the conceptualization of race in the 1850s. Imperialism, manifest destiny, and nationalism apply to the second section, while fascism applies to the third. The second section analyzes two high-brow journals and some President's State of the Union Addresses to show tribalist nationalism, the expansion of the United States to the Pacific Ocean and the treatment of Native Americans in the process, the expressed desires to expand into Asia, and the filibuster insurgents that attempted to annex Cuba and conquered Nicaragua. The third section covers the 1860s and 1870s, with Edward A. Pollard's two books and his revisionist history, the origins of the Ku Klux Klan, the origins of other white supremacist organizations, the violence committed against African Americans during Reconstruction, convict leasing and the attempts to control black labor, anti-democratic policies that restricted the civil and constitutional rights of blacks, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

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Process Analysis Statement

When I first started this project, I was initially arguing something different than what my paper says now. My original argument was based on Roger Griffin's *Fascism* and his definition of the ideology, and my goal was to apply his definition to Manifest Destiny and the American exceptionalist rhetoric that we see in the 1850s. A few weeks in, however, my advisor caught a problem: I had misinterpreted Griffin's definition of fascism, and as it turned out, manifest destiny at this time only fit half the definition and was missing a key element that makes something fascist. My whole argument was at fault! Fortunately, I had not gotten too far into the woods, and he suggested I argue from Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* and her analysis that imperialism leads to totalitarianism. From that point forward, I was not arguing that the antebellum United States was fascist, but instead imperialist that had totalitarian aspects, such as the genocide of Native Americans and the filibusters.

The ironic problem that I had writing the first section was that I had too many primary source examples. If I were to put them in, my paper would have exceeded the page limit that was set. I had to pick examples that exemplified my argument and apply them to the whole decade before the Civil War, which is why I only observe publications from the early 1850s. Finding these examples involved reading through dozens of publications through numerous journal entries until the rhetoric I was searching for appeared. It took hours to compile a comprehensive list with multiple links.

Apart from the time it took finding examples in journals, finding other primary sources were actually quite easy. Bracken Library had the book William Walker published after his Filibuster mission conquering Nicaragua, as well as some secondary sources that helped give context to the conflict in China that almost dragged us into an international war. I found other

primary sources from HathiTrust Digital Library, which contains thousands of digitized archival materials across the nation. Most notably, a lot of material I used came from the University of California, Cornell University, Stanford University, and the University of Michigan, as well as one-time sources from other prestigious universities. I also used the Library of Congress's "Chronicling America," which contains countless photos of old newspapers. These sources helped me find the media report on large events, particularly surrounding the filibusters in the first section and violence against African Americans in the second section.

One of the most difficult things about writing this paper was actually finding secondary sources for my terms. Initially, I only had one definition of fascism, Roger Griffin's. To find more, I browsed several other books, some of which proved no use for me. The same thing happened when I looked for more definitions of manifest destiny: there were some books I observed that weren't what I was searching for, specifically some that were more literature rather than historical. Additionally, after finding appropriate sources, putting them into a cohesive argument and whittling down their points to come out with the best definition was no easy task. Ultimately, however, it allowed me to take a leap into the void and actually form my own definition of nationalism, a widely defined term. It was exciting, putting my own thoughts with other scholars.

After my introduction, I got into a rhythm. Every morning I would wake up and write one page or do some more research. I started in August, and by December, I had already written over forty pages. The same applies to the second chapter, and I spent most of my winter break mornings writing. When I started this thesis, I was planning to write only about sixty pages. After all my research, however, the page count kept expanding until it reached almost ninety. For example, in my second chapter, I reached the conclusion and was exhausted from writing so

much. What I realized, however, is that I had missed an important topic that was mentioned in my thesis, and I had to go back and make another section. Finally, after I had completed that, I was writing my conclusion, only to realize that what I am writing in the conclusion has to be its own section, too! Twice, then, I had to stop on my conclusion, go back, and add even more to an already behemoth undergrad paper. It was one of those situations where if I exempted the new sections, my argument would weaken, and important information would be glossed over. I had to swallow my exhaustion from writing and push through.

What shocked me most in the middle of my second chapter was my own argument. Initially, I wanted to avoid labeling any part of the United States as fascist until the modern era, but as time went on and primary sources neatly fit into the established definitions of fascism, I felt that it was the only direction to go. When I started this project, I would not have believed that the post-Confederate south harbored any fascist rhetoric, but now, it appears to be the only logical conclusion. I am aware of how controversial this argument is, but controversial does not mean outwardly incorrect. As I have stated early in my paper, Americans would never label their own actions as fascist. This denial, I believe, hinders American politics, perpetuating the myth that fascism cannot happen in the United States when it has already deeply rooted itself in the government with the Trump administration.

Fascism is not an easy topic to discuss, simply because its definition is not fully agreed upon among scholars. I even found myself digressing from Roger Griffin, whom I put his core definition of fascism as my main argument. It is even more difficult when arguing that something outside Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany is fascist, especially when fascism is inherently linked to World War II in many people's minds. A nation does not need a holocaust to be fascist, however, and simply because fascism has not fully consumed the United States does not make it less

fascist. The best course of action to take beyond this point is to dissect Donald Trump's actions and rhetoric in office and apply the definitions established here to assert that he truly is America's first fascist president.

There is one large part of fascism that I could not address in this paper, which is capitalism. Fascism, economically speaking, is heavily invested in the capitalist system. The first reason why I did not address it is that Marxist and communist thinkers had made that connection since fascism's rise in the twentieth century, and to repeat their works would be redundant. Second, this paper was a focus on the rhetorical aspects of fascism. I had not actually addressed the many policies that were instilled in the country, including the economic aspects behind it. Slavery is beneficial to capitalism, and one of the Confederacy's largest complaints about the Civil War was that the human beings they owned were released without monetary compensation. They still perceived black people as property, not humans. For capitalism, however, unpaid labor is beneficial, and if the point of capitalism is to earn as much money as possible, then slavery is a logical conclusion.

Another thing I wish to address is the effort it took to write this paper. I tried to work each day from August 2019 to February and March 2020, writing approximately one page a day. Some days it was easy, some days it was overwhelming. The constant pressure of having an unfinished project hanging over your head can get to you, as it has gotten to me many times. I am proud of what I have written, but I can certainly say at this point that I am completely burnt out from writing at all. This whole experience was a great learning experience, but at this point, looking at graduation, I merely want it to be done.

I see this paper as my cumulative education as an undergraduate historian. Over four years, I wrote many historical pieces, but this one, in my opinion, is my prized work. Not only

does it contain the many lessons of historical writing that I have learned, but it also takes a radically new approach in interpreting American history. The comparison between fascism in Europe and the United States in the twentieth century has been thoroughly written on, as I have mentioned, but taking the cruel ideology's definitions and rhetoric and directly applying them to historical American documents is unprecedented. Furthermore, I tackle the difficult notion of taking a twentieth-century ideology and applying it to the nineteenth century. Fascism was not "official" until the 1910s in Italy, yet similarities can be seen fifty years earlier. This paper is detailed, tough, and controversial, and I could not be prouder to have written it.

In my heart, I do not wish for this piece to go unnoticed. I want to have an impact on the academic world, even if my ideas are not initially accepted. The publishing process in journals and other academia settings is foreign to me, but writing this paper taught me to be flexible and accept changes in my thoughts and writing style. I am curious how others will respond to my piece, or if anybody will respond at all. It may be my youthful energy driving me to try and be influential, but there is no harm in dipping my toes into the tough academic world. In the end, I can see this paper fleshing out to be a Master's thesis or even a Ph. D dissertation. The evidence is there, it only needs to be strung together in a cohesive and thorough argument. Only time will be able to tell, however.

The Return of Fascism? Why Fascism Never Left

In the twenty-first century, the United States has grown to love and support a fascist political machine. Rightwing populists and other conservative movements have used and embraced fascist rhetoric to cement their power within the federal government and society itself. Its most boisterous advocate is President Donald Trump.¹ If fascism is an ideology, the question is not necessarily *how* we got to this point, but rather *what antecedent beliefs* in American history supported this type of thinking? There is a historical explanation as to why some Americans have chosen to support a fascist regime. To answer this question, we must first set aside our contemporary understanding of fascism. Indeed, we must start our analysis before World War II, which dramatically and permanently changed the world's perspective on fascism when it witnessed the atrocities committed by the regimes of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

¹ There are some that will claim that modern conservatives and Donald Trump are not fascists but instead are rightwing populists. According to philosopher Jan-Werner Muller, rightwing populism is “a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified... people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior.” Ultimately, its goal is to purify the population. Muller also states that rightwing “populists are always *antipluralist*. Populists claim that they, and they alone, represent the people.” This antipluralist theme threatens democracy, “for democracy requires pluralism and the recognition that we need to find fair terms of living together as free, equal, but also irreducibly diverse citizens,” as Muller asserts. In short, rightwing populism is anti-democratic in nature. Jan-Werner Muller, *What is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016): 3, 19-20.

Muller's definition of rightwing population clashes with Roger Griffin's own definition. Griffin defines rightwing populism as “an illiberal but democratic and *non-revolutionary* form of politics driven by widespread... mistrust of ruling and political and economic elites, both domestic and international.” Roger Griffin, *Fascism* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2018): 95. But Griffin forgets to consider that this type of populism cannot be democratic since it is antipluralist, and thus anti-democratic. In addition, fascism is also antipluralist in nature, since it requires the exclusion of many groups that would have representation in a democracy. Furthermore, assuming the United States is traditionally considered a democracy, then something that challenges that foundation would have to be revolutionary, since it seeks to overthrow an established system. Finally, historically, fascists have come to power by democratic means, most notably the National Socialists in Germany.

The term “fascist” has seldom properly come into circulation in contemporary politics. Historian Walter Laqueur importantly remarks that “few [fascist] movements refer to themselves as *neofascist*, preferring instead such labels as ‘National Front,’ ‘Republican,’ or even ‘Liberal.’ Academic writers now refer to them as right-wing extremists or right-wing populists, national revolutionaries, national socialists, or some other such term.” Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: past, present, future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 4. According to Laqueur, rightwing populism has become a euphemism for fascism. No modern rightwing populist or conservative movement would call themselves fascist, but the mere claim of not being fascist is not enough to exempt them from the term. Griffin's attempt to disconnect rightwing populism from fascism ignores actual fascist movements that mask themselves with the term “populist.”

Because of the evil nature of this watershed event, many Americans have cognitive dissonance; they have failed to connect their own fascist rhetoric to the ideology of the Axis powers. Many of today's conservatives vehemently deny that they are fascist even though they voted for a fascist political leader. Even World War I is not an early enough starting point. Although Benito Mussolini and his political organization, the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento, had already labeled themselves Fascists by 1915, Mussolini's language was derived from international, pre-war ideologies. It is my argument that in the United States, fascist beliefs began much sooner than Mussolini's pronouncement. Fascist rhetoric does not appear in a vacuum, and when we analyze political rhetoric in the mid-nineteenth century, the decades surrounding the Civil War, we find similar language to what is used in contemporary fascism. For these two chapters, I will focus on two specific concepts: *manifest destiny* and *palingenetic ultranationalism*. I will explore the rationale behind manifest destiny in the context of imperialism and provide historical examples of palingenetic ultranationalism. It is important to note that I am not suggesting that antebellum America was actually fascist. Rather, I am arguing that there were certain levels of discourse in this era that laid the foundation for American fascism.

Two books I will be working with are Roger Griffin's *Fascism* and Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*. These two books, when applied to the Trump presidency, paint him as a fascist. Although Arendt argues that imperialism leads to totalitarianism, her definition can easily be applied to the birth of Trump-style fascism. Whereas Griffin provides one of my working definitions of fascism, it paints a vivid picture of how the American history which led to Trump is actually much bleaker than what is commonly believed. Our contemporary political atmosphere has a dark history.

Before the 2016 election, political commentators knew that Trump was a fascist. On July 15, 2016, *New Yorker* columnist Adam Gopnik wrote that “it is no surprise that the American face of fascism would take on the forms of celebrity television and the casino greeter’s come-on, since that is much our symbolic scene as nostalgic re-creations of Roman splendors once were Italy’s.”² This celebrity worship had already been adequately critiqued after World War II, by the two Frankfurt School critics, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. In the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, they constructed a psychological and sociological profile “of the ‘potentially fascist’ individual.” They believed “that the greatest danger to American democracy lay in the mass-culture apparatus of film, radio, and television.”³ It should be no surprise, then, that a businessman and reality television host would consume the attention of a large portion of the American population. Others, however, argue that Trump is not just a flash-in-the-pan phenomenon, but is simply a cog in the historical machine that is moving toward global fascism. Journalist David Remnick argues that “Donald Trump did not ignite but merely joined a miserable, destabilizing trend of illiberalism that has been under way for years in Russia, Turkey, China, India, Southeast Asia, and Western, Eastern, and Central Europe.”⁴ Regardless of Trump’s role in global political history, how he came to power in the United States is one of the most compelling questions in America today. This paper is an attempt to connect Trump’s rise to power with ideas that reach deep into America’s past.

The following sections in this first chapter detail the terms, definitions, and the evidence used to demonstrate the roots of American fascism. The first section defines fascism and

² Adam Gopnik, “Being Honest About Trump,” *New Yorker*, July 15, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/being-honest-about-trump>.

³ Alex Ross, “The Frankfurt School Knew Trump Was Coming,” *New Yorker*, December 5, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-frankfurt-school-knew-trump-was-coming>.

⁴ David Remnick, “Donald Trump and the Stress Test of Liberal Democracy,” *New Yorker*, March 11, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/19/donald-trump-and-the-stress-test-of-liberal-democracy>.

imperialism, particularly Griffin's *Fascism* and Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*. Their books are essential to the foundation of my argument. In the second section, we begin our historical analysis of the origins of manifest destiny. After laying the foundation of manifest destiny, the third section defines nationalism, which fueled the cause for manifest destiny. After we define these terms, the fourth section elaborates on the perception of race as part of the national discourse and how it shifted from the cultural language in the mid-nineteenth century to biological in the late nineteenth-century. In the fifth section, we change course and offer a brief introduction to the primary sources used, particularly two popular journals in the 1850s. These two journals exemplified the two popular political parties at the time, the Whigs and the Democrats, which both participated in the nationalist discourse. The sixth section analyzes these journals, rife with American exceptionalism and tribal nationalism, which follows Arendt's argument about imperialism. With this notion of American exceptionalism, we show in the seventh section America's expansion to the Pacific Ocean and the genocide of the Native Americans, which was the objective of manifest destiny. The eighth section follows America's unrelenting desire to expand and its desire to enter Asia from the west. The ninth and final section is about American filibusters and their attempts to annex Cuba into the United States and the conquering of Nicaragua, showing that manifest destiny also included southern expansion.

Defining Fascism and Imperialism⁵

It is important to first define fascism. This is no simple task. Roger Griffin has discussed the convoluted nature of fascism, especially since the ideology has become an enigma in post-World War II political thought. To help us through this confusion, Griffin defines one of the

⁵ For other definitions of fascism that are not used in this chapter, see Appendix A.

terminologies with which I will be working: *palingenetic ultranationalism*. Palingenetic comes from the two Greek words *palin* (again) and *genesis* (birth), “to refer to the fascists’ vision of imminent or eventual rebirth” of a nation. Ultranationalism, with the prefix ultra- (“beyond” in Latin), must be distinguished from nationalism. Griffin states that “the imagined community, the ‘nation’, so central to the fascist mindset, has moved irrevocably beyond the spectrum of social ideals compatible with liberal democracy.”⁶ What Griffin means here is that fascism cannot work under the parameters of democracy, and thus fascists will attempt to undermine the system to gain power. Griffin makes the important point that not all forms of nationalism are fascist. Fascism, however, is always nationalist. To reiterate, Griffin would not argue that mid-nineteenth-century American nationalism was fascist, and I agree. However, when coupled with the notion of a country in crisis, nationalism can easily tip over to undemocratic beliefs. While palingenetic ultranationalism does not encompass every aspect of fascism, it does provide the basic foundation for other aspects of fascism.

Philosopher Hannah Arendt argues that imperialism is the precedent to totalitarianism, which is an important aspect of fascism. First, she stresses the difference between imperialism in an empire, like the Roman empire, and in a nation-state, like the United States. She says, “they [conquest and empire building] had been carried out successfully only by governments which, like the Roman Republic, were based primarily on law, so that conquest could be followed by integration of the most heterogeneous peoples by imposing upon them a common law.” In brief, for a country to conquer and build an empire, it must provide the conquered people a set of laws by which they can *integrate* their culture into the empire. The conquered people are allowed to maintain their way of life, but they must follow a new, universal set of laws. This is not the case

⁶ Griffin, *Fascism*, 40-42.

with nation-states. Arendt writes, “The nation-state, however, based upon a homogeneous population’s active consent to its government..., lacked such a unifying principle and would, in the case of conquest, have to assimilate rather than to integrate, to enforce consent rather than justice, that is, to degenerate into tyranny.”⁷ In this case, the homogeneous population is white, protestant, American citizens who consent to the United States federal government. Any conquered people, such as the Native Americans, are not unified and integrated into the population by a universal set of laws, but instead are forced to assimilate to the ways of American life and surrender their culture in its entirety.⁸ The only way that this dominance is achieved is by force, which, as Arendt argues, degenerates into tyranny. To reinforce her point, she argues that “no nation-state could with a clear conscience ever try to conquer foreign peoples, since such a conscience comes only from the conviction of the conquering nation that is imposing a superior law upon barbarians. The nation, however, conceived of its laws as an outgrowth of a unique national substance which was not valid beyond its own people and the boundaries of its own territory.”⁹ Americans perceived their national laws as unique and most certainly imposed its “national substance” on Native Americans and others that lived in the west beyond the country’s borders. In summary, the United States’ manifest destiny is not conquering or empire building, but is instead tyrannical and a precedent to totalitarianism and fascism.¹⁰

Second, Arendt also bridges the gap between imperialism and nationalism. She affirms that imperialism breeds class conflict, since the elite class benefits from it while the lower classes

⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (United States: Harcourt, Inc., 1968): 125.

⁸ For more information on white totalitarianism, see Obed Frausto, “White Democracy and the Foreigner: A Call for Plural, Cultural Democracy,” in *The Weariness of Democracy: Confronting the Failure of Liberal Democracy*, ed. Obed Frausto, Jason Power, and Sarah Vitale (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 153-169.

⁹ Ibid., 126-127.

¹⁰ Arendt argues this point herself, writing, “imperialism is not empire building and expansion is not conquest.” Ibid., 130.

are left out. The solution to class conflict, she ironically notes, is imperial expansion. Although our focus is not on capitalism or class, the main takeaway from Arendt's argument is that expansion is a unifying, nationalist goal that inevitably oppresses people caught in the nation's expanding territory. She writes, "in a society of clashing interests, where the common good was identified with the sum total of individual interests, expansion as such appeared to be a possible common interest of the nation as a whole." The reasons are that because "...expansion was conceived as unlimited," every citizen in the United States was capable of moving west and reaping the elite-class benefits of imperialism. In the United States, imperialism was a national goal, and thus was intrinsically tied to nationalism. "These then," Arendt stresses, "are the reasons why nationalism developed so clear a tendency towards imperialism.... The more ill-fitted nations were for the incorporation of foreign peoples..., the more they were tempted to oppress them."¹¹

Defining Manifest Destiny

Before we explore historical evidence behind manifest destiny, it is important to first look at the historiography that interprets this term. Manifest destiny was first coined by John O'Sullivan in 1845, when he referred to the United States' annexation of Texas. Interestingly enough, O'Sullivan never defines the term. He focuses more on those that attempt to curtail America's strength: "...it is surely to be found, found abundantly... in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the

¹¹ Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, 152-153.

continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”¹² For such a groundbreaking term that manifest destiny has in America’s conception of itself, O’Sullivan uses it casually. Historian Anders Stephanson provides the best context for it, however, explaining that “its origins, in fact lay directly in the old biblical notions, recharged through the Reformation, of the predestined redemptive role of God’s chosen people in the Promised land: providential destiny revealed. The world as God’s ‘manifestation’ and history as predetermined ‘destiny’”¹³ In other words, the belief was that God created North America (the New World) for the white man to inevitably conquer.

Stephanson further elaborates on Americans’ perception of westward expansion for their nation. He suggests, “visions of the United States as a sacred space providentially selected for divine purposes found a counterpart in the secular idea of the new nation of liberty as a privileged ‘stage’... for the exhibition of a new world order, a great ‘experiment’ for the benefit of humankind as a whole.” In short, Americans believed that the creation and expansion of their nation would permanently transform the world for the better. Furthermore, he notes how “the notion that the United States was a sacred-secular *project*, a mission of world-historical significance in a designated continental setting of no determinable limits. This ‘nationalism,’ then, differed markedly from the European model which emerged simultaneously.”¹⁴ What Stephanson describes is *ultranationalism*. While manifest destiny most certainly has ideals that parallel ultranationalism, it is *not* palingenetic. American’s perspective of westward expansion was not that they were *rebirthing* mankind, but instead were *progressing* and *perfecting* mankind. For this reason, manifest destiny fits all of Arendt’s definition of imperialism, but only

¹² John L. O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17, no. 1 (July 1845): 2, <https://bit.ly/2MmTrWH>.

¹³ Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny* (United States: Hill and Wang, 1995), 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5, 28.

fits half of Griffin's definition of fascism. It is the absence of palingenetic that shows how nineteenth-century America held the antecedent beliefs of fascism without taking the full form of twentieth-century fascism.

Further evidence of manifest destiny's connection to Arendt and disconnection from Griffin is shown by Dan E. Clark, who finds that the rationale behind manifest destiny is present before the term was coined. He writes, "it includes, in the first place, the emotion which prompted Elkanah Waston, prophesying in 1778 for the year 1900, to speak of 'the decrees of the Almighty, who has evidently raised up this nation to become a lamp to guide degraded and oppressed humanity.'"¹⁵ Once again we see language depicting America as founded by God and how the nation will be a savior to a fallen human population, furthering humanity's perfection and bettering the world.

Additionally, Major Wilson reflects on Americans in the nineteenth century who debated how far the United States borders should reach. He expresses, "the advocates of a manifest destiny of expansion for the nation did not always agree among themselves about how far the boundaries of the United States would likely go, though some of the more sanguine supposed that the flag might one day fly over the entire hemisphere. But all of them assumed that the idea of republican freedom... must and would prevail throughout the New World."¹⁶ The aggressive need to expand 'republican freedom' beyond the established borders of the United States is identical to Arendt's imperialist argument.

¹⁵ Dan E. Clark, "Manifest Destiny and the Pacific," *Pacific Historical Review* 1, no. 1 (March 1932): 1, <https://bit.ly/2OeEb0j>.

¹⁶ Major Wilson, "Ideological Fruits of Manifest Destiny: The Geopolitic of Slavery Expansion in the Crisis of 1850," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 63, no. 2 (Summer 1970): 134-135, <https://bit.ly/352dGBp>.

Defining Nationalism

I build my definition of nationalism based on Bart Bonikowski and Paul DiMaggio's political psychological nationalism, Edward Pessen's transcendent good nationalism, Karl Umbrasas' discovered nationalism, Markus Kemmelmeier and David Winter's ingroup nationalism, and Paul Quigley's argument of nationalism's "logical conclusion."¹⁷ Therefore, I define nationalism as an ideology that focuses on benefitting and growing the nation by any means necessary, with the notion of superiority over other nations, that will inevitably resort to violence against entities that pose a threat to either its identity or structure. This definition encompasses the core value of nationalism (superiority) with its aggressive drive for achievement (by any means necessary) and the violence that occurs as a result.

The important thing about this definition is that it is a product of a general consensus that American nationalism has differed from European nationalism. For example, political scientist Minxin Pei argues "...American nationalism is a different breed from its foreign cousins,"¹⁸ and he is not alone in pointing out America's exceptional components of nationalism. Historians Hans Kohn and Daniel Walden remark that "as a product of the eighteenth-century interpretation of the English tradition of liberty, the American people believed themselves to represent a general trend of human development towards a better society."¹⁹ In short, Americans believed themselves to be the natural progression of humanity. In *American Nationalism*, Kohn touches on how western expansion in the country (i.e. manifest destiny) helped both unite Americans and form American nationalism. He writes, "...it melted them in this process into something new, and

¹⁷ For the discussion on the debates on defining nationalism, see Appendix B.

¹⁸ Minxin Pei, "The Paradoxes of American Nationalism," *Foreign Policy*, no. 136 (May-June 2003): 34, <https://bit.ly/2VbPeJg>.

¹⁹ Hans Kohn and Daniel Walden, *Readings in American Nationalism* (New York: Litton Educational Publishing, 1970): 3-4.

filled all Americans with the pride in the common venture of empire building. But of equal importance was the fact that this westward movement contributed much to the illusion that the United States was something fundamentally different and remote from Europe.”²⁰ Kohn is correct in this regard; Americans were under the illusion that they were fundamentally different from other countries. Additionally, while Griffin narrows the definition of fascism in simpler terms, he emphasizes that

the inner coherence of fascism as a generic concept emerges once these different permutations [of fascism] are interpreted in relation to a **core utopian myth** of an ideal state of society and civilization and the practical consequences of attempting to translate that myth into practice in a particular historical context.²¹

Griffin’s emphasis on “core utopian myth” parallels Kohn’s assertion that Americans were illusioned regarding their own exceptionalism. If we return to our discussion of ultranationalism and imperialism, we can see how Pei and Kohn are describing the same thing. The point is not that the building of the American nation-state was historically unoriginal, but the idea that nineteenth-century Americans perceived themselves to be exceptional in history. As a result, Americans perceived that their values should become universal, and should expand beyond the country’s borders and encompass the world.

The Perception of Race

There is one theme that underlies nineteenth-century America’s manifest destiny and nationalism: race and racism. Historian Reginald Horsman’s *Race and Manifest Destiny* aptly explores this topic. He articulates,

by 1850, a clear pattern was emerging. From [Americans’] own successful past as Puritan colonists, Revolutionary patriots, conquerors

²⁰ Hans Kohn, *American Nationalism: An interpretative essay* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1957): 22.

²¹ Griffin, *Fascism*, 46.

of a wilderness, and creators of an immense material prosperity, the Americans had evidence plain before them that they were a chosen people; from the English they had learned that the Anglo-Saxons had always been peculiarly gifted in the arts of government; from the scientists and ethnologists they were learning that they were a distinct Caucasian race, innately endowed with abilities that placed them above other races; from the philologists, often through literary sources, they were learning that they were the descendants of those Aryans who followed the sun to carry civilization to the whole world.²²

Horsman describes how Americans shaped their image to be superior Anglo-Saxons, the true, civilized race destined to transform the world. This sense of racial exceptionalism fueled the drive to expand the country westward by any means necessary. It also established the image of the United States as being a strictly white, Anglo-Saxon, even Aryan race, which created a racial, nationalist mindset. This point can be seen throughout all of American history with the genocide of the Native Americans and the enslavement of black peoples. It is important to remember, however, that in the mid-nineteenth century, before eugenic studies in the 1870s, race meant something else. It was not the fact that because Americans were simply white that they believed other races were inferior. Instead, they linked race and whiteness to characteristics of civilization, which included politics, religion, technology, and education. They saw other races as uncivilized, and thus inferior. Horsman's explanation shows that the Aryan race was not expected to carry out its racial identity to the world, but their *civilization*. This distinction is important because it separates the mid-nineteenth century concept of race with civilization from the later nineteenth century (and beyond) concept of race with the development of eugenics and race studies.

²² Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981): 5.

American Imperialism: Nationalism, Manifest Destiny and Antebellum United States

Analyzing Nineteenth-Century Documents

When we look at nineteenth-century sources, we find pertinent examples of manifest destiny and nationalist rhetoric. An important resource is the *United States Democratic Review*, a journal published from 1839 to 1859, started, owned, and edited by John O’Sullivan himself. Second, I will look at the *American Whig Review*, a journal published from 1844 to 1852. These journals published literature and political essays that supported their respective political party’s platform at the time, but the *Whig* publication ended with the decline and dissolution of the Whig party. To narrow the scope of both journals, I will concentrate on the publications from 1849 to 1852.

Three themes present themselves in these years regarding American nationalism and imperialism: first, how the United States changed the course of world history; second, how the United States is the greatest nation in all of history; and third, how the United States should expand into foreign territories. If the political labels of Democrat and Whig were removed from these articles, there would be almost no difference in the nationalist and imperialist rhetoric used.

American Significance and Tribal Nationalism

In 1849, the rhetoric surrounding how America changed the course of world history was clearly visible. In a book review in the *Democratic Review*, the author voices that, for all Americans, “our feelings of national pride are as liberal as they are just.” The author’s emphasis is that this pride is not prompted by a “local spirit” and is not bound by “territorial lines.” The author continues that “our institutions were warmed into life under the focus of the accumulated

lights of the eighteenth century; were not the results of an accident, but the deliberate act of an enlightened people-- an important step in the progress of man....” The author demonstrates the belief that with the creation of the United States, humankind as a whole progressed further than it had before. As a result, the author believes that “constitutional freedom, as established by our revolution, changed the current of human events, and is destined to direct and control the march of nations.”²³ The combination of America’s sense of enlightenment and dramatic historical significance represents how Americans considered themselves unique in history. In the same journal in 1852, we see further evidence of American’s perception that they dramatically changed world history. The *Democratic Review* was concerned about the election of 1852 and the Whigs who, at the time, controlled the White House and Congress. This concern did not prevent them from propping up the United States as the greatest nation on the planet. As one author writes,

in every land of Europe, from the Atlantic shore to the Turkish confines, the United States have a more numerous, more chivalrous, and more powerful army, than the monarchic and absolutist tyrants of the people-- it *is* the people-- it is the 250 millions of suffering humanity, to whose ideas the United States is a heaven beyond the setting sun-- who dream in gladsome ecstasy of the day when our flag shall be unfurled, or even our nod, earthshaking as the nod of Jove, shall be given for the liberation of nations.²⁴

The author asserts that not only is America destined to liberate European nations, but also that hundreds of millions of people in Europe *also* believe that America is destined to liberate European nations.

Finally, in an article discussing the new California territory in the *American Whig Review*, the author embellishes how this newly acquired territory shaped world history. The

²³ “The Republic,” *United States Democratic Review* 24, no. 124 (March 1849): 257-258, <https://bit.ly/35KwPbq>.

²⁴ “Eighteen-Fifty-Two and the Presidency,” *United States Democratic Review* 30, no. 163 (January 1852): 4, <https://bit.ly/2WmZuz6>.

author maintains that “it is no ordinary position, that in which these acquisitions have placed us. It is a position of the deepest world-wide historical significance.” Furthermore, the author asserts that “its significance is in fact that it contains the elements, the principles, the forces of A NEW CENTRALIZATION OF THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH. It is the beginning of a great American epoch in the history of the world. ...Just so certainly the acquisition of these territories on the Pacific, seems destined to make our country the world’s historical centre.”²⁵ Once again, the author confirms the view that it was the United States’ time to permanently alter world history.

Language of America’s unique place in history can also be found beyond these two high-brow journals. In 1853, in President Franklin Pierce’s first State of the Union Address, he celebrates that “the United States have continued gradually and steadily to expand, through acquisitions of territory, which, how much soever some of them may have been questioned, are now universally seen and admitted to have been wise in policy, just in character, and a great element in the advancement of our country, and, with it, of the human race, in freedom, in prosperity, and in happiness.”²⁶ As the most powerful voice in the country, and as a speaker for the American public mindset, we see that the perception of American historical significance bleeds deep into the average American’s life.

America’s vision of historical significance leads to our second point that American’s perceived the United States as the greatest thing to occur in all of history. In the *Democratic Review*, an author argues how radicalism influenced how the country was shaped, suggesting that people from Europe “came to a land where the wild luxuriance of nature ‘speaking in her

²⁵ “California,” *American Whig Review* 9, no. 16 (April 1849): 331, <https://bit.ly/2BhBjbw>.

²⁶ Franklin Pierce, “First Annual Message,” The American Presidency Project, Gerhard Peters and John Woolley, accessed November 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2NKm6qh>.

thousand tongues,' reminded them of the freedom it was their's [sic] to acquire. They found a place for sowing a better civilization than the world had yet known."²⁷ In short, the author claims that the United States is the historical apex, a sentiment that bolsters nationalism. In the same journal, another article dissects fanaticism in the United States. The author reflects on the creation of the Constitution, indicating that "the people of the United States have distanced all their contemporaries, and enjoyed a degree of happiness and prosperity without a parallel in the history of mankind." Specifically highlighting the nation's grandeur, the author brazenly compares the nation to the greatest civilization in history, boasting that "[the American people] have increased and multiplied sevenfold; they have expanded over a territory twice greater than that of Rome."²⁸ These essays in the *Democratic Review* were not spouting partisan politics; they were offering a national consciousness that the United States was unparalleled in history.

The Whigs concurred. In 1850, one *Whig Review* author explains the history of colonization, bragging, "a more effectual, though unsystematic, colonization than ours, the world has never known. It surpasses that of all other nations, not only in its rapidity but in the spirit by which it is sustained, and in its effects upon the nation at large."²⁹ To complement this idea, in 1852, another author asserts that "the Whigs look upon their country as the great but only home of true liberty. Every where else upon the face of the world is oppression, suffering, bloodshed, and the imitations of a fearful storm. This country is, in fact, the only refuge for the exile who would be really free. This country alone, in the midst of a general discontent, is happy, peaceful,

²⁷ "Radicalism," *United States Democratic Review* 25, no. 135 (September 1849): 206-207, <https://bit.ly/32q60Ho>.

²⁸ "The Conspiracy of Fanaticism," *United States Democratic Review* 26, no. 143 (May 1850): 386, <https://bit.ly/32zMnNj>.

²⁹ "Stability and Growth of the Republic: Colonization," *American Whig Review* 11, no. 30 (June 1850): 559, <https://bit.ly/2oSqdH9>.

and respected.”³⁰ Much like the Democrats, the Whigs perceived the United States as the sole beacon of liberty and freedom on the planet.

The type of rhetoric we observe in these journals qualifies as imperialist, and is, according to Arendt, tribal nationalism. She defines tribalism as starting “from non-existent pseudomystical elements which it proposes to realize fully in the future. It can be easily recognized by the tremendous arrogance, inherent in its self-concentration, which dares to measure a people, its past and present, by the yardstick of exalted inner qualities and inevitably rejects its visible existence, tradition, institutions, and culture.” The non-existent pseudomystical elements in American culture stems from the understanding that, as the greatest known country in history, the United States will inevitably liberate the world. One of the reasons for America’s historical triumphalism was its focus on individual liberties, which held that it was the individual and the freedom of the population that was fundamental to the country. Second, both the Democrats and Whigs had “tremendous arrogance.” As a consequence of such hubris and, according to Arendt, the belief in non-existent elements, there was a rejection of the real, political nature of the country.

Expansion to the Pacific and Treatment of the Native Americans

After the Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States took control of the land that is now California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and parts of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. At the same time, the United States was negotiating with the United Kingdom for the Oregon and Washington territory. This vast addition of land to the country incentivized many Americans to head west beyond the Mississippi river. The promise of

³⁰ “Whig Principles and its Development,” *American Whig Review* 15, no. 86 (February 1852): 130, <https://bit.ly/36fhwre>.

wealth of riches came with land grants provided by the federal government. Then, in 1849, when gold was discovered in California, hordes of Americans accelerated west in hopes of striking it big. For these reasons, the United States wished to expand its western border to the Pacific Ocean for economic gain. Manifest destiny may have had religious beginnings, but Americans convinced themselves that they had the divine right to any economic gain in the newly annexed land.

The means by which the United States acquired the land was the result of imperialism. The Mexican-American War led by President Polk was a classic example; it was a land grab that completely disregarded the indigenous people living there. If we return to President Pierce's 1853 State of the Union Address, America's impression of the events become apparent. To reiterate, he says, "the United States have continued gradually and steadily to expand, through acquisitions of territory, which, how much soever some of them may have been questioned, are now universally seen and admitted to have been wise in policy, just in character...."³¹ The Mexican-American War may have been a wise economic policy for the United States since it expanded its borders, but it was clearly an imperialistic act against the Mexicans and Native Americans in the disputed region.

Along with the violent seizure of land from Mexico, the treatment of the Native Americans throughout the 1850s reveals the unjust process of imperialism. In several State of the Union addresses from Presidents Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, James Buchanan, they mention how the United States government used the military to repress the Native Americans. President Fillmore, in his 1851 Address, observed that

along the Mexican frontier, and in California and Oregon, there have been occasional manifestations of unfriendly feeling, and some depredations committed. I am satisfied, however, that they resulted more

³¹ American Presidency Project, "Franklin Pierce: First Annual Message," <https://bit.ly/33wdrgP>.

from the destitute and starving condition of the Indians than from any settled hostility toward the whites. As the settlements of our citizens progresses towards them, the game upon which they mainly rely for subsistence is driven off or destroyed, and the only alternative left to them is starvation or plunder. It becomes us to consider, in view of this condition of things, whether justice and humanity, as well as an enlightened economy, do not require that, instead of seeking to punish them for offences which are the result of our own policy towards them, we should not provide for their immediate wants, and encourage them to engage in agriculture, and to rely on their labor, instead of the chase, for the means of support.

It initially appears that President Fillmore recognized the Native Americans' plight, particularly in the need for food. While his apathy towards their situation is apparent-- being more concerned about race relations than for the actual survival of their population; calling the need for food during starvation a "want;" and saying that the country should not give them food, but teach them agriculture-- he does not believe punishing them through military action is the solution. But also in the same speech, he brazenly demonstrates his inconsistency, stating,

the Indians in California, who had previously appeared of a peaceable character, and disposed to cultivate the friendship of the whites, have recently committed several acts of hostility. As a large portion of the reinforcements sent to the Mexican frontier were drawn from the Pacific, the military force now stationed there is considered entirely inadequate to its defence. It cannot be increased, however, without an increase of the army; and I again recommend that measure as indispensable to the protection of the frontier.³²

President Fillmore first argued the United States government should not punish the Native Americans for their aggression, but immediately appeals to Congress that the military must be expanded to contain them by means of force. In the following year, in his 1852 Address, he discusses how the Native Americans in the West have no rights in the country and that their circumstances are merely at the will of the white man: "...in California and Oregon there has been no recognition by the government of the exclusive right of the Indians to any part of the

³² Millard Fillmore, "Second Annual Message," The American Presidency Project, Gerhard Peters and John Woolley, accessed November 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/33LWwXB>.

country. They are, therefore, mere tenants at sufferance, and liable to be driven from place to place at the pleasure of the whites.” The reason for this, he offers, is because the Native Americans rejected the proposed treaties, which meant that “if it be the desire of Congress to remove them from the country altogether, or to assign them particular districts more remote from the settlement of the whites, it will be proper to set apart by law the territory which they are to occupy, and to provide the means necessary for removing them to it.”³³ His solution to the Native American problem in the West are obvious actions of imperialism. What we see here is that even though his initial rhetoric was treating Native Americans with slight respect, he showed his true intentions through military action.

President Pierce continued the tradition of using the military against the Native Americans. In his 1854 State of the Union Address, he reports that “the experience of the last year furnishes additional reasons, I regret to say, of a painful character, for the recommendation heretofore made to provide for increasing the military force employed in the territory inhabited by the [Western] Indians.” His reasoning is that the Native Americans were killing Americans migrating into the area. Therefore, according to him, “the recurrence of such scenes can only be prevented by teaching these wild tribes the power of, and their responsibility to, the United States.” He continues, claiming that without increasing the military budget, “these scenes [of violence] will be repeated, it is to be feared, on a larger scale, and with more disastrous consequences.”³⁴ Pierce’s language is more aggressive than Fillmore’s, but the use of the military and the demand to expand it is identical. In his 1855 Address, even though he only briefly mentions the Native American conflict in the West, he made sure to let the American

³³ Millard Fillmore, “Third Annual Message,” The American Presidency Project, Gerhard Peters and John Woolley, accessed November 9, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2NJaa8p>.

³⁴ Franklin Pierce, “Second Annual Message,” The American Presidency Project, Gerhard Peters and John Woolley, accessed November 10, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2rIoDZJ>.

people know that “efficient measures have been taken, which, it is believed, will restore quiet, and afford protection to our citizens.”³⁵ It is not until his 1856 Address that he clarifies that the “protection to our citizens” is through the use of military force against the Native Americans: “the army during the past year has been so constantly employed against hostile Indians in various quarters, that it can scarcely be said, with propriety of language, to have been a peace establishment. Its duties have been satisfactorily performed, and we have reason to expect, as a result of the year’s operations, greater security to the frontier inhabitants than has been hitherto enjoyed.”³⁶ The threat of force was a constant narrative against the Native Americans for American imperialist purposes.

Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, President Buchanan also used military force against the Native Americans. In his first State of the Union Address in 1857, he reminds the nation about the “wild, untractable [sic], and difficult to control” Native Americans in the West. His solution, not unexpectedly, is the use of the military: “hence expensive military expeditions are frequently necessary to overawe and chastise the more lawless and hostile.” In addition, he also argues that the ongoing policy for Native Americans is not working: “the present system of making [the Native Americans] valuable presents to influence them to remain at peace has proved ineffectual. It is believed to be the better policy to colonize them in suitable localities, where they can receive the rudiments of education and be gradually induced to adopt habits of industry.”³⁷ Much like the two presidents before him, President Buchanan reinforced the imperialist measures taken against the Native Americans.

³⁵ Franklin Pierce, “Third Annual Message,” The American Presidency Project, Gerhard Peters and John Woolley, accessed November 10, 2019, <https://bit.ly/373FCWA>.

³⁶ Franklin Pierce, “Fourth Annual Message,” The American Presidency Project, Gerhard Peters and John Woolley, accessed November 10, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2O7sjvA>.

³⁷ James Buchanan, “First Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union,” The American Presidency Project, Gerhard Peters and John Woolley, accessed November 11, 2019, <https://bit.ly/33OeBnW>.

Hannah Arendt explains the decisions of these three presidents. To reiterate, she connected nationalism with imperialism, arguing, “the more ill-fitted nations were for the incorporation of foreign peoples..., the more they were tempted to oppress them.”³⁸ In her argument, nationalism develops toward imperialism due to class struggle and capitalism, but the sources we’ve looked at demonstrate that nationalism developed toward imperialism outside of economic concerns. Americans believed that their politics, religion, education, technology, and their individuality was superior to any other culture on the planet, most directly, the Native Americans in their midst. As a consequence, since the Native Americans differed from European Americans in many stark ways, European Americans inevitably oppressed them. Not only does this use of violence support Arendt’s connection between nationalism and imperialism, it also returns us to my own definition of nationalism, particularly that nationalism inevitably turns to violence to achieve its goals.

Expansion into Asia

Once the United States had successfully pushed its borders to the Pacific Ocean, its citizens were still not satisfied with what they had achieved. They continued to look westward, this time to the banks of Asia. Their motivation, however, extended beyond economic reasons and included religion and politics. An author writing in the 1849 *Democratic Review*, expounding on the newly annexed state of California, writes that American values must progress beyond the Pacific Ocean and into Asia from the east: “since the Roman empire perished... the tide of emigration has been constantly westward, with the Saxon race ever in the van. The lapse of fifteen hundred years of progress in every respect finds the old Asiatic stock improved into the

³⁸ Arendt, *Totalitarianism*, 153.

American race, concentrating upon the Pacific Ocean, preparatory to a return into the bosom of Asia, carrying with them civilization, Christianity, and political science.” Furthermore, the author suggests, “...Asia may now observe breaking in the East the dawn of civilization. The Americo-Saxon race is about to invade her with the steam-engine and the printing-press. The bible and the ballot-box are coming back to Asia from the East...”³⁹ If we return to Horsman’s comments on race, we see that Americans believe themselves superior to the people of Asia not just because they were a different race, but because they deemed them as an uncivilized people. White Americans were less interested in spreading whiteness or eradicating other races than bring civilization, Christianity, political democracy, and technology. In an 1852 *Whig Review* article promoting the construction of a transcontinental railroad as a mode of expansion, the author provides an ulterior motive to reach other societies through trade. The author articulates that “there remains but one other method of preparing the Asiatic nations for the reception of truth [Christianity]; and that is, to raise their opinion of the Western races, and awaken kindly and respectful feelings in them toward ourselves, by a free and constant commercial intercourse.” The author emphasizes the importance of conquest to “civilize the hordes of Asia,” which will “strengthen and confirm our own empire,” and take the initiatory step toward the “grand design of Christian benevolence, the civilization and instruction of Asia.”⁴⁰ What these two articles demonstrate is that Americans desired to expand, not just economically, but religiously and politically.

The problem with the perpetual need for expansion, whether it is economic, political, or religious, is that it ultimately leads to violence, a point we have previously established. For

³⁹ “California-- Its Position and Prospects,” *United States Democratic Review* 24, no. 124 (May 1849): 427, <https://bit.ly/2VRTLAX>.

⁴⁰ “The Great Pacific Railroad,” *American Whig Review* 10, no. 19 (July 1849): 72, <https://bit.ly/32BDLp2>.

Americans seeking to extend their influence in Asia, this was not an exception. In President Buchanan's 1857 State of the Union Address, in requesting the construction of ten small warships, he, almost threateningly, declares, "at the present moment we have no armed vessel in the navy which can penetrate the rivers of China."⁴¹ Even in the context of the two previously mentioned articles, this is the first time the military was brought up regarding China. What other way, however, would the United States have been able to achieve its imperialistic goals beyond economics, and spread their religion, politics, education, and technology other than with military force?

The willingness to use force almost got the United States involved in an international war with China. A conflict between China and the United Kingdom involved a Chinese-built ship named *Arrow*, also crewed by Chinese citizens (but captained by an Irishman), in the port-city of Canton, China. The ship was caught smuggling illegal goods and it was also flying the flag of England, the Union Jack.⁴² It is contested whether or not the flag was taken down from the ship, but nonetheless, the British government used it as an excuse to attack Canton. On October 29, 1856, the British blew a hole in the wall of the city. Then, astonishingly, U.S. consul James Keenan was seen on top of the wall bearing the American flag. Before the day ended, the commanding officer of the U.S. navy stationed there disavowed the act "as unauthorized and stating that it must not be regarded as compromising in the least degree the neutrality of his country." But the denouncement did not work. On November 15, 1856, the Chinese soldiers in the forts near Canton fired on a U.S. warship. Consequently, since Commodore James

⁴¹ American Presidency Project, "James Buchanan: First Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union," <https://bit.ly/33OeBnW>.

⁴² J.Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism, and the Arrow War (1856-1860) in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3-4.

Armstrong “felt that the U.S. flag had been insulted,” the United States sent ships back the next day and destroyed the forts.⁴³

By means of negotiation, tensions were ameliorated between the United States and China, and the two countries remained neutral. The conflict between China and the United Kingdom, however, exploded into what is now known as the Second Opium War (1856-1860) that involved the U.K. and France against China. At the time, President Buchanan waited for more information on the incident before deciding what to do. A year later, in his 1858 Address, he reported his conclusions:

after a careful examination and extent of our grievances, I did not believe they were of such a pressing and aggravated character as would have justified Congress in declaring war against the Chinese empire, without first making another earnest attempt to adjust them by peaceful negotiation. I was the more inclined to this opinion, because of the severe chastisement which had then but recently been inflicted upon the Chinese by our squadron in the capture and destruction of the Barrier forts to avenge an alleged insult to our flag.⁴⁴

He believed that the destruction of the forts to “avenge” the flag being insulted was enough chastisement for China, and thus, war was not necessary.

What the conflict in Canton demonstrated was that the United States’ own sense of superiority almost got it involved in an international war. Furthermore, the destruction of another nation’s forts for “insulting the flag” was not equitable. One of the ironies about America’s hubris is that, in an 1852 *Whig Review* article, the author briefly criticizes China, writing, “the Chinese standard of comparison being wholly within themselves, they are, from position, doomed to be the nation of egotism.”⁴⁵ Each article and speech mentioned so far here has demonstrated America’s own problems with egotism from both of the large political parties and

⁴³ Ibid., 6-7.

⁴⁴ James Buchanan, “Second Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, The American Presidency Project, Gerhard Peters and John Woolley, accessed November 11, 2019, <https://bit.ly/351Lpdw>.

⁴⁵ “The Central Nation,” *American Whig Review* 15, no. 88 (April 1852): 317, <https://bit.ly/32WpzHI>.

presidents of the 1850s. Its consequences, as we have seen, is aggressive competition with other countries that can swiftly turn into warfare, even though, with the victory of the Second Opium War for Great Britain and France, the United States could reap the benefits of imperialism.

Expansion into the Caribbean Islands and Central America

Unlike the United States' objective to expand to the Pacific Ocean and into Asia, there were partisan divides on whether or not the United States should expand beyond the Gulf of Mexico and into the Caribbean Islands and Central America. Questions as to whether or not the United States should annex Cuba started around the time of the Mexican American War. While the United States federal government took no initiative to try and pursue the debated objective, there were some individual men, known as the filibusters, that took measures into their own hands. They sought expedition and the conquering of countries on their own behalf. They were a phenomenon that gripped the nation during the 1850s, with support from Democrats and dissent from Whigs, particularly because the filibusters, along with the Democrats, wanted to expand slavery.

One of the most noteworthy filibusters was Narciso Lopez. According to historian Robert E. May's *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, Lopez was a Venezuelan-born man who sought to liberate Cuba from the Spanish empire. He arrived from Cuba to Rhode Island on July 23, 1848 to escape arrest from Spain's crackdown on revolutionary movements. From there, he moved to New York and connected with the Cuban Council (which, as May notes, was "headed by John L. O'Sullivan's brother-in-law, Cristobal Madan"), an offshoot organization of the Havana Club, which was made up mostly of "Creole merchants, planters, and professionals who favored the

annexation of their island to the United States.”⁴⁶ It was here, then, that Lopez began to recruit men to form a militia to liberate Cuba.

It was not just foreigners who supported this filibuster movement, but also Americans, most notably John L. O’Sullivan and Colonel George W. White. After a year of planning and recruiting, the movement’s militia felt prepared for their objective and, on July 31, 1849, hundreds of men landed on Round Island, located off the coast of Mississippi.⁴⁷ The United States federal government was aware of and concerned about the organization’s movements as early as August 4, 1849. In a letter from the Office of U.S. Attorney of Alabama to the Secretary of State, the Attorney of Alabama mentions how Colonel White “seems to have for some time been engaged in enlisting men for some unknown enterprise, and has at present engaged some three hundred to five hundred men, most of whom are now believed to be on Round Island.... These men do not appear to be armed; but the Collector has been informed that a sum of money amounting to nearly \$200,000 has recently been placed to the credit of Col. White in this city.”⁴⁸ That money would eventually be used to purchase firearms for their endeavor. President Zachary Taylor later made a proclamation regarding the Cuban expedition, declaring that the federal government will uphold treaties with peaceful countries, and that “I have, therefore, thought it necessary and proper to issue this Proclamation, to warn all citizens of the United States who shall connect themselves with an enterprise so grossly in violation of our laws and our treaty obligations, that they will thereby subject themselves to the heavy penalties denounced against

⁴⁶ E. Robert May, *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 14, 22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁸ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Message of the President of the United States, transmitting reports from the several Heads of Department relative to the subject of the Resolution of the Senate of the 23rd of May, as to alleged revolutionary movements in Cuba*, 31st Cong., 1st sess., 1850, S. Ex. Doc. 57, 4, <https://bit.ly/2OnF1YL>.

them by our Acts of Congress, and will forfeit their claim to the protection of their country.”⁴⁹

On September 8, 1849, one of the expedition ships was detained by the Navy and arrests were made. Consequently, this action had “broken up their plans, and the charter party has been abandoned on all sides.”⁵⁰ The United States federal government successfully stopped the Cuban expedition, but because there was no recognized violation of U.S. treaties, nobody was charged. For Lopez, this shutdown was merely a setback, and he quickly assembled another expedition.

Much like the previous expedition, the new one also garnered support from prominent Americans. John O’Sullivan still advocated for it, but in addition, Democratic Senator Thomas J. Rusk of Texas and Mississippi’s Democratic governor John A. Quitman supported the militia. Rusk offered O’Sullivan 500 Texans for the endeavor, and it was rumored that Quitman turned over Mississippi state arms to the filibusters.⁵¹ Unlike the previous attempt, elected government officials endorsed and actively supported this new endeavor.

The news about the new expedition was broken by the newspaper *New York Sun* on May 11, 1850. It proclaimed that “ALL THE VESSELS OF THE CUBAN EXPEDITION HAVE SAILED, AND, WITHOUT DOUBT, ARE, AT THIS MOMENT, HOVERING ON THE COAST OF CUBA!” The next day, the newspaper *New York Herald* wrote, “we do not believe this story. We do not believe that any such expedition has yet sailed; whose interests would be affected to the amount of millions by such an adventure, may be assured that the whole thing is a humbug.” The *Herald*’s reason for denying the *Sun*’s report is because the *Sun* had previously authored hoaxes, and the *Herald* believed that this was merely another one. On the topic of annexing Cuba, the *Herald* was supportive, arguing, “we are not ready for annexation of Cuba.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁵¹ May, *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld*, 25, 27.

We have quite enough to do at home. We have already annexed more than we can take care of decently,” specifically regarding the newly acquired lands from the Mexican American War. It continues, remarking that once the U.S. has taken care of the mentioned lands, “it will be time enough to talk about a sumptuous banquet upon the lovely isle of Cuba, or the strong food which Canada could supply.”⁵² For the *Herald* and its readers in New York, annexing Cuba-- and even Canada-- was not off the table, but instead should happen later. This point is reinforced by its reply to the *Sun*, saying, “it is nonsense to talk about Cuba now. We shall not want the island for several years to come. Wait a while.”⁵³ Indeed, it was not that the newspaper did not want to annex Cuba, but instead insisted that it should be a later goal for the country.

The *Herald* judged incorrectly. A week later, on May 19, in the middle of the night, Narciso Lopez and over 500 men landed at Cardenas, a port city in Cuba. After a skirmish with the soldiers guarding the city, Lopez and his militia took control of Cardenas at around 8 o’clock in the morning. According to one of the participants, the group “had suffered a loss of some six or eight killed, and twelve or fifteen wounded; the Spanish loss was probably about the same...”⁵⁴ Spanish reinforcements arrived later in the day, and after a brief battle that killed fifty Spanish soldiers and thirty invaders, the filibusters retreated,⁵⁵ leaving two men behind, who were publicly executed. The ship they fled on, named the *Creole*, was pursued by the Spanish warship *Pizarro* to Key West, a city on an island off the coast of Florida. It was here that Lopez and his men were arrested and put on trial. One of the people on trial was John Henderson, a

⁵² James Gordon Bennett, “The Cuba Expedition-- What Is It?,” *New York Herald*, May 12, 1850, 2, <https://bit.ly/2Y1W8lX>.

⁵³ James Gordon Bennett, “Atrocious and Outrageous Hoax,” *New York Herald*, May 12, 1850, 2, <https://bit.ly/2Y1W8lX>.

⁵⁴ Richardson Hardy, *The History and Adventures of the Cuban Expedition, From the First Movements Down to the Dispersion of the Army at Key West, and the Arrest of General Lopez* (Cincinnati, Lorenzo Stratton, 1850): 41, <https://bit.ly/2XQHgXa>.

⁵⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Message of the President of the United States*, 43, <https://bit.ly/2OnF1Yl>.

lawyer, who according to one report, “...made his own defence, and played the innocent to a miracle; the jury could never agree, which caused the United States’ attorney to enter a *nolle prosequi* [unwillingness to pursue the case], and thus the whole batch of prisoners was discharged.”⁵⁶ The filibusters managed to get away with their crimes, fighting and killing Spanish forces with the intent to overthrow its government and annex Cuba. One of the defenders of their actions was, interestingly enough, Whig senator John M. Clayton of Delaware. Clayton was skeptical about whether or not Americans had even participated in the endeavor. Nonetheless, he wrote,

but let us suppose that the men captured on the Mexican island were American citizens, and had occupied it intending to invade Cuba, still, I cannot recognize the right of the Spanish authorities to hang, garote [sic], or shoot them for that intention. There was yet a locus penitentiae [sic] left for every man of them, and they might have returned to the United States, guilty indeed of a violation of the laws of their own country, but of no law, that I am aware of, under which Spain could have punished them. The intention to commit crime is not, *per se*, crime. Some overt act must accompany the intent. A design to commit murder is not murder, nor is it, without some attempt to carry it into execution, punishable by the laws of man.⁵⁷

He made two points defending the filibusters: first, that the Spaniards had no laws to punish the men who invaded a colony of their country; and second, that the *attempt* to commit a crime, like attempted murder, is not actually a crime. It does not take an expert in law to understand that Clayton’s defense is ridiculous, especially considering that the Spaniards had the right to punish a group that attempted to usurp its government in its colony, and that attempting to commit a crime *is* a criminal act, specifically attempted murder.

Lopez felt no chagrin, and he immediately established a third expedition. Approximately 480 men, most of whom were American, participated, and on the night of August 11, 1851, the

⁵⁶ Thomas Wilson, *An Authentic Narrative of the Piratical Descents Upon Cuba* (Havana: 1851): 6, <https://bit.ly/2OrmHxJ>.

⁵⁷ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Message of the President of the United States*, 48-49, <https://bit.ly/2OnF1Yl>.

group landed on the coast of Cuba. Lopez told Colonel Crittenden, an American, to keep fifty men where they landed. He then proceeded inland with the other 400 men to Las Cosas. The next morning, the men were attacked by a large fleet of Spanish troops. Fifty of Lopez's men were killed, but they still managed to fight off the troops. The group moved from city to city, finally securing themselves in Candelaria. It was there that they faced more Spanish troops, and they dispersed, with an estimated hundred fleeing into the nearby forest, including Lopez. During this time, Colonel Crittenden was frustrated with having to stay on the coast, and he proceeded to Las Cosas at the command of Lopez. Shortly after embarking, Crittenden and his men were attacked by another fleet of Spanish troops, causing them to flee into the surrounding hills, where they remained for two days. Although they managed to return to the coast and debark, they eventually had to return to shore because they were starving. They were finally captured close to Cayo Levisa, and only two were able to escape; fifty prisoners were taken by the Spaniards. The prisoners were taken to Havana, where the Spanish government issued that they, most of them consisting of Americans, should "suffer this day the pain of death, by being shot." All fifty were subsequently executed. But Lopez and other men were still on the loose, and the Spanish government kept chasing them down. As a result, many of the crewmen gave themselves up and they were also executed. Lopez was soon captured in Los Pinos de Ranges. He was taken to Havana and was executed by garrote.⁵⁸ The expedition to liberate and annex Cuba was finally over.

What, then, were the motives for Americans to follow Narciso Lopez to free Cuba from Spanish rule? Apart from the lavish promises of economic opportunity that came with the arguments for territory expansion, it was the promise of annexing the country as a slave state that

⁵⁸ *The Attempted Revolution of Cuba, From Its First Invasion at Cardinas, Down to the Death of Lopez, at Havana* (New York: Dewitt & Davenport, 1851): 21-23, 25, 27, <https://bit.ly/2XTdnpt>.

most attracted them. Indeed, Americans were more motivated by the promise of expanding the United States' slave empire into Cuba, and not with Lopez's purpose of liberating Cuba from imperialism. In the dual language New York newspaper *La Verdad* (*The Truth*), created just for the support of annexing Cuba as a slave state, the editors compiled numerous articles supporting the annexation in 1849, a year before Lopez embarked on his first expedition. In the opening article, the justification for their belief was that the United States had acquired too many free states, and "to balance this wide domain of free soil, there is but a comparatively small band of States along the extreme South, and to which the island of Cuba can make no frightful addition." The article continues that "the non-slaveholding States would show a most ungenerous sectional spirit if they object to the addition of Cuba to the political weight of the South, for her vote will not give the South an even, much less a controlling voice."⁵⁹ For some Americans, the attempt to annex Cuba, in order to perpetuate the practice of slavery, had similarities to the reasons for the American Civil War. In another *La Verdad* article that responded to the *Journal of Commerce* that opposed annexation, the author argues,

we entreat [the publisher of the *Journal of Commerce*] not to forget the unhappy inhabitants of Cuba, who suffer more than the slaves of the Southern States: not to forget those thousands of wretches of Africa, who every year are torn from their land of nativity, and their kindred, in order to be inhumanely huddled together and transhipped like as many bundles of merchandise into the islands of Cuba... there to perish in perpetual servitude. --all which evils will cease entirely the moment annexation is consummated.⁶⁰

The author's spurious argument is that the United States must annex Cuba because its free citizens are treated worse than the slaves in the South (a false claim), and that, through annexation, we can end the evil practice of the slave trade. What is ironic with the second half of

⁵⁹ Editors, "La Verdad," *A Series of Articles on the Cuban Question* (New York: Editors of "La Verdad," 1849): 6, <https://bit.ly/2qGPNA9>.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 16.

the author's argument is that, for the author, the Atlantic slave trade is inhumane, but the practice of slavery is not.

Much like some American's desire to annex Cuba, there was another group of American filibusters that wanted Nicaragua. At the start of May, 1854, a civil war broke out in Nicaragua between the Liberal and Conservative parties. At the same time, the other significant filibuster, William Walker, had returned from a filibuster campaign in Mexico to southern California. He was the editor of a paper with Bryon Cole, who left the paper and departed to Nicaragua. When he arrived in its former capital, Leon, he received a contract from Liberal party leader Francisco Castellon that authorized "three hundred men for military duty in Nicaragua." Cole returned to California and gave the contract to Walker, who promptly rejected it on the grounds of the United States' neutrality laws. Cole went back to Nicaragua and received "a colonization grant, under which three hundred Americans were to be introduced into Nicaragua, and were to be guaranteed forever the privilege of bearing arms." In May, 1855, fifty-eight Americans joined Walker on the ship *Vesta* to Nicaragua. On June 16, the American mercenaries arrived on the west coast of Nicaragua, close to El Realejo, a city near Leon. A week after their arrival and meeting other Nicaraguan military officials, on June 27, Walker officially commanded fifty-five Americans and 110 Nicaraguans.⁶¹

The next few months was fraught with that killed numerous Nicaraguans and Americans, but on October 13, 1855, a watershed moment occurred. Walker and his troops attacked the capital, Granada, and defeated the Conservative party's military. A few days later, the Nicaraguan secretary of foreign affairs was executed, and, under threat of more executions, on October 23, the Conservative general Ponciano Corral agreed to a treaty. A fourteen-month

⁶¹ William Walker, *The War in Nicaragua* (New York: S. H. Goetzel & Co., 1860): 24, 25, 32, 37, 45.

provisional government was formed, with the former Nicaraguan customs official Patricio Rivas as president and the American Walker as the commander-in-chief of the country's army.⁶² The civil war was over. Even though Rivas was president, since Walker commanded the military, he was regarded as the stronger leader.

Relations between the native Nicaraguans and the filibuster Americans rapidly deteriorated in April and May of 1856. Part of the reason was that during the provincial government, Costa Rica invaded the country, and El Salvador and Guatemala also threatened to invade, partially because of American's presence. Second, elections were held in the country in April to formalize their government, but voting was only counted in areas not involved in fighting Costa Ricans, and "so irregular and incomplete had been the balloting that Walker insisted upon calling a new election." Walker also believed he could win the popular vote if a new election were held. Third, President Rivas told Walker that El Salvador would recognize its provincial government "if the American forces were reduced to 200 men." Walker rejected this proposal on the grounds that it was "a move to get the Americans out of the country." With tensions already rising, the final straw for Rivas was Walker's arrest of General Salazar for violating army regulations. This terrified Rivas, and on June 10, he issued a decree for another election. Rivas believed that the Americans, specifically Walker, were prepared to overtake the government, while Walker believed Rivas was plotting against him and the Americans. The relations fully shattered when, on June 20, Walker decreed that Rivas and the acting minister of war Maximo Jerez were traitors. Meanwhile, Rivas negotiated a treaty of amity and alliance with El Salvador, and, on June 26, proclaimed Walker "'an enemy of Nicaragua'" and divested him "of the authority with which he had been honored by the Republic." Even with all the opposition

⁶² May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 47-48.

against him, Walker still held an election based on the June 10th decree, but only in the surrounding areas that did not contain anybody he deemed traitorous. The results of the fraudulent election were predictable, with the announcement on July 10 that “Walker was the overwhelming choice, receiving 15,935 votes to the 4,447 cast for Ferrer, 2,087 for Salazar, and 867 for Rivas.”⁶³ His inauguration was two days later on July 12. William Walker, the American filibuster, was now President of Nicaragua.

During Walker’s presidency, his most important decree on September 22, 1856, was, according to Walker himself, “the act around which the whole policy of the administration revolved.” For some context, Nicaragua had become an independent republic on April 30, 1838, by the Constituent Assembly of the Republic. Walker thus decreed, “Article 1. All acts and decrees of the Federal Constituent Assembly, as well as of the Federal Congress, are declared null and void. Article 2. Nothing herein contained shall affect rights heretofore vested under the acts and decrees hereby repealed.” In a single act, Walker essentially abolished Nicaragua’s government and all the laws it had passed in its short history. He was Nicaragua’s new dictator. Why? According to Walker, “one of the earliest acts of the Federal Constituent Assembly was the abolition of slavery in Central America; and as this, among other acts, was repealed by the decree of the 22d of September, it was generally supposed the latter re-established slavery in Nicaragua.”⁶⁴ Indeed, Walker abolished Nicaragua’s constitution because he wanted to reinstall the practice of slavery. Not only that, but Walker purposely made this decree as a statement to the South in the United States. He writes, “While the slavery decree was calculated to bind the Southern States to Nicaragua, as if she were one of themselves, it was also a disavowal of any

⁶³ Charles Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1980): 344-346.

⁶⁴ Walker, *The War in Nicaragua*, 255-256.

desire for annexation into the Federal Union.” Walker then proceeded to criticize the South for not acting against its enemies and expand slavery, asking, “is it not time for the South to cease the contest for abstractions and to fight for realities?” In this context, the abstraction is Kansas and the slavery question there, and the reality is the demand for the South to expand slavery. He concludes, “the true field for the exertion of slavery is in tropical America.”⁶⁵ Walker conquered Nicaragua and reinstalled slavery as a call to the South to pursue its objectives and actually expand slavery.

Walker’s reign lasted less than a year until the spring of 1857. During that time, the Costa Ricans were still in the country and were aggressively taking over cities. The Costa Ricans received support from Cornelius Vanderbilt, who was frustrated at the filibusters for interfering with his business there. The United States and British navies arrived to protect their interests. Eventually, after a great amount of pressure, on May 1, 1857, Walker surrendered to the U.S. Navy. He was not arrested or charged with any crime, and he arrived back in New Orleans on May 27. Reports say that when he stepped off the ship in New Orleans, he was greeted like a hero, with people cheering, and for several days he was an honored guest.⁶⁶

As soon as he arrived, however, he immediately planned an expedition back to Nicaragua. On November 14, he departed to Central America with a militia of 200 Americans. But after he arrived in the region, he was forced to surrender to the U.S. Navy, and was returned to the U.S. on December 26. Immediately, Walker again tried to return to Nicaragua. This time, however, the U.S. custom officials kept close tabs on him. He could not recruit nor get a ship, and he was even briefly detained once on October 7, 1859. But, with great tenacity, Walker attempted a fourth expedition, and, on June 16, 1860, he arrived on some British colony islands

⁶⁵ Ibid., 266, 277, 280.

⁶⁶ Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny*, 407-408.

off the coast of Honduras. He was later pursued by the Honduran military and the British warship *Icarus*, and Walker surrendered to the British on September 3. The British turned Walker over to the Hondurans, and they subsequently executed him by firing squad on September 12. Thus, Walker's filibustering career, and all filibustering in Central America, ended.⁶⁷

The decade of American filibustering in the Caribbean Islands and Central American ended with Walker's execution. What is striking is the United States' unwillingness to arrest and charge Narciso Lopez, William Walker, and any of the men that participated in their efforts, with any crimes. It took other countries, such as Spain and Great Britain, to halt their aggressiveness. Both Lopez and Walker attempted numerous times to conquer their targets, and the United States only acted as a temporary deterrent. These men did not cease their aggression until their executions. The United States government was responsible for not stopping these men and their supporters; Lopez should have been imprisoned after his second expedition, and Walker should have been imprisoned after surrendering the first time. President James Buchanan even relented charging Walker with crimes because of societal pressure not to.⁶⁸ It is clear that the public supported the aggressive campaigns of Lopez and Walker to expand slavery by conquering countries outside the United States border.

Conclusion

With American exceptionalism and tribal nationalist rhetoric, the expansion of the United States to the Pacific Ocean and the suppression of the Native Americans that followed it, the desire to expand into Asia and the brief international conflict that occurred because of America's

⁶⁷ May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 49-51.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

pride, and the filibuster campaigns into Cuba and Nicaragua with the intent to expand slavery, it is obvious that the United States was an imperialist country in the antebellum era. During these events, we also witness Arendt's argument become a recurring theme. Rather than offer integration, the United States' enforced consent and assimilation of its culture and, consequently, subjected anyone in its way to tyranny.

One of the difficult things about discussing American expansion and imperialism is the large scope that it encompasses. In this paper, I cover just a sliver of these themes, but the country started expanding after the Revolutionary War in 1776 and did not stop expanding its territory until the middle of the twentieth century, 180 years later. But American imperialism continues to this day. In the postbellum era, in the 1890s, the United States conquered Hawaii and gained Guam and the Philippines after the Spanish-American War, and in 1959, both Hawaii and Alaska were annexed as states. If we follow Arendt's argument to its historical conclusion, then because this country has been an imperialist power for such a long time, there may come a time when it falls into totalitarianism. The people that were conquered by the Americans were subjected to tyranny, but the American government may soon turn inwards to control its own population.

If we can conclude that the United States was imperialistic, where, then, does fascism come into play? This will be the focus in the second half of my research, observing the postbellum United States. In the antebellum era, there were clear indications of *ultranationalism*, but no indications of *palingenesis*. Palingenesis cannot really occur unless a country reaches a point of ultimate destitution, such as the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany after both countries were destroyed during World War I. In the United States, the Confederate states were annihilated, making it the perfect breeding ground for proto-fascist rhetoric and thought.

Combining the loss of the Confederacy, the sparing of its leaders and soldiers, the ending of slavery and many ways of Southern life, and the creation of eugenics late into reconstruction, it left the possibility for *palingenesis* to take root, especially when taking into consideration the popular phrase “the South will rise again!” But that subject is for another time.

Finally, how does all of this tie into the present-day Republican party and President Trump? American imperialism is alive and well: the Vietnam War, the Afghanistan War, and the Iraq War were, arguably, acts of imperialism. Art pieces, such as Mexican painter Diego Rivera’s 1936, *Carnival of Mexican Life. Dictatorship*, connects the United States’ and the United Kingdom’s flags with Japan’s Rising Sun flag and Nazi Germany’s swastika flag. Furthermore, the Civil War and the Confederate legacies are still alive and well in our country, the most obvious example is the 2017 Charlottesville, Virginia “Unite the Right” rally. In that rally, hundreds of white supremacists and neo-Nazis, carrying Nazi and Confederate flags, surrounded a statue of General Robert E. Lee to prevent it from being torn down. After one neo-Nazi drove his car into a counter-protest group and killed one person, President Trump stated, “yes, I think there’s blame on both sides. If you look at both sides — I think there’s blame on both sides. And I have no doubt about it, and you don’t have any doubt about it either.”⁶⁹ The Civil War and the Confederacy remains in our lives to this day, but now it has mutated into fascism. In the second part of my research, this topic will be discussed more in depth.

There are numerous different directions that a paper on this topic can take. What we have seen from Arendt and other fascist scholars is fascism’s connection to capitalism. Capitalism is a significant part of fascism, and there have already been many publications making the connection, especially in communist publications. On race relations, I only briefly covered the

⁶⁹ “Remarks by President Trump on Infrastructure,” Remarks, White House, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-infrastructure/>.

treatment of the Native Americans, and this topic can be (and already has been) expanded on, particularly with the genocide of the Native Americans. I only scratched the surface of slavery and how white Americans enslaved an entire race. While this topic has been well covered, it is not necessarily been to connection to fascism. There are so many directions and topics to explore and connect together, and, hopefully, we will see those connections be made in the future.

The Turn to Proto-Fascism: Palingenetic Ultrnationalism and White Supremacy in the Post-Confederate South

Introduction

In the first chapter, we investigated the decade before the Civil War and found a nationally-supported imperialist cause that consumed land in droves. Meanwhile, totalitarian measures were taken against Native Americans, and regionally-supported insurgents attacked Cuba and aggressively conquered Nicaragua in the name of slavery. What we did not find, however, were signs of proto-fascism. Leading up to the most violent war in American history, the United States was, in many ways, unstoppable on the North American continent. Conditions for fascism do not normally appear in a country that has not fallen into destitution. After the South created its own country, however, and was subsequently defeated in the war, the region was in ruins physically, economically, and culturally, including the base platform of the South: slavery. We must ask, then: after the war, were there any signs of fascism in the South, according to our established definitions? If so, how prevalent was it, and what was its impact in the United States? In order to answer these questions, we will continue to use Roger Griffin's definition of fascism through *palingenetic ultrnationalism*. Additionally, we will also use Robert Paxton and Renzo de Felice's definitions to identify other signs of fascism.

Simply because the Confederacy was defeated does not mean its leaders, soldiers, and citizens abandoned their values and goals. Instead, their fight transitioned from the battlefield to the pen, revising history, performing local extralegal action, and going into government to pass policies that maintain white supremacy and refuse African Americans their democratic and constitutional rights. The evidence found so far exhibits not only Griffin's definition of fascism,

but also fits into both Paxton's and de Felice's definition as well.⁷⁰ Combining these three definitions into a whole, they demonstrate that the Confederacy's legacy is proto-fascist. Its legacy bleeds far into the future, reaching to us 155 years later, and manifests mostly in the presidency of Donald Trump.

To first accomplish this objective of demonstrating the Confederacy's proto-fascist legacy, we will start from just after the Civil War to the beginning of the twentieth century. The first section addresses Edward A. Pollard's *The Lost Cause* and *The Lost Cause Regained*, two books that created the notion of the Confederacy's "Lost Cause," an idea that is repeated to this day. We start here because Pollard's text set the precedent for revisionist history. We see this revisionism in the second section that covers the Ku Klux Klan and emphasizes Nathan Bedford Forrest's reputation before he became the Grand Wizard of the Klan. The Klan emerges from this "Lost Cause" narrative. The third section builds on this principle of white supremacy, demonstrating other white supremacist organizations that proliferated in the South outside the Klan. We show in the fourth section the violence committed by these white supremacist organizations against African Americans throughout the Reconstruction era, emphasizing how fascism results in violence against targeted minorities. The fifth section is about convict leasing and the penal system used to return African Americans to a state of slavery, demonstrating how the South never relinquished its totalitarian institution. Finally, having worked chronologically through this analysis, the sixth section is about the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate veterans and their exaltation of extraordinary leaders, both of which are still active today.

⁷⁰ See Appendix A in chapter 1 for Robert Paxton and Renzo de Felice's definitions of fascism.

The Confederacy's "Lost Cause"

One of the major reasons why the Civil War occurred was because of slavery. It was an issue that had plagued the nation from the beginning and it eventually led to South Carolina's secession on December 20, 1860 and the start of the war in April 1861. The secessionist articles of the Southern states show that slavery was their reason for leaving the Union. The Confederates attacked the United States Federal government at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and ignited the Civil War, which lasted four years, and cost over 600,000 American lives. When the dust settled, the Union was victorious, the Confederacy was crushed, and the South was in ruins. Slavery was swiftly abolished in the South and former slaves were granted citizenship and constitutional rights, elevating them to the same legal level as white Americans. The war's legacy is still with us today, particularly in symbols of the Confederacy that are still openly displayed.

Soon after the war's end, the post-Confederate South focused on revising the war's history in their favor. Edward A. Pollard led this charge. His watershed publication *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* was the first to argue that the Civil War was not fought over slavery, but instead was about states' rights and Northern aggression. His objectives for writing the book were clear: "Unfortunately, the world has got most of its opinions of Southern parties and men from the shallow pages of Northern books; and it will take it long to learn the lessons that the system of negro servitude in the South was not 'Slavery;' that John C. Calhoun was not a 'Disunionist;' and that the war of 1861, brought on by Northern insurgents against the authority of the Constitution, was not a "Southern Rebellion."⁷¹ Pollard's arguments are disingenuous at best. First, it had been well established that "negro

⁷¹ Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (New York: E. B. Treat & Co., 1866), 43-44.

servitude” was, in fact, slavery; second, John C. Calhoun, had he been alive for South Carolina’s secession, would have supported that action, and thus would have been a disunionist; and third, the “war of 1861,” the Civil War, was brought on by Southern secession and their aggressive attack against the Union at Fort Sumter. The problem is that Pollard’s main purpose was to take anything negatively associated with the South and the Confederacy and spin it so that Confederate soldiers were heroes to Southerners and victims of Northern aggression, rewriting the reality that they did indeed fight for slavery.

Pollard ardently deemphasized the role of slavery in the war in order to prevent the Confederacy from looking like it fought for corrupt and inhumane values. He could not accept the fact that the South could fight for something as base as slavery; fighting over slavery was beneath Southern dignity. To affirm Southern pride after losing the war, he asserts Southern superiority:

it would be immeasurably the worst consequence of defeat in this war that the South should lose its moral and intellectual distinctiveness as a people, and cease to assert its well-known superiority in civilization, in political scholarship, and in all the standards of individual character over the people of the North. That superiority has been recognized by every foreign observer, and by the intelligent everywhere; for it is the South that in the past produced four-fifths of the political literature of America, and presented in its public men that list of American names best known in the Christian world. That superiority the war has not conquered or lowered; and the South will do right to claim and to cherish it.⁷²

To bolster his argument, Pollard defends slavery on three grounds. First, the North, in its jealousy of the South, painted the institution as being worse than it was. He writes somewhat sneeringly, “the North naturally found or imagined in slavery the leading cause of the distinctive civilization of the South, its higher sentimentalism, and its superior refinements of scholarship

⁷² Ibid., 751-752.

and manners. It revenged itself on the cause, diverted its envy in an attack upon slavery, and defamed the institution as the relic of barbarism and the sum of all villainies.” The problem with his deduction is that slavery was, in fact, barbaric and the sum of all villainies, even if Pollard writes otherwise. Second, he justifies the institution's existence by pointing out its economic benefits. He asserts,

But, whatever may have been the defamation of the institution of slavery, no man can write its history without recognizing contributions and naming prominent results beyond the domain of controversy. It bestowed on the world's commerce in a half-century a single product whose annual value was two hundred millions of dollars. It founded a system of industry by which labour and capital were identified in interest, and capital therefore protected labour.

Third, he maintains that black people benefitted from slavery. He writes,

We shall not enter upon the discussion of the moral question of slavery. But we may suggest a doubt where whether that odious term ‘slavery,’ which has so long imposed, by the exaggeration of Northern writers, upon the judgement and sympathies of the world, is properly applied to that system of servitude in the South which was really the mildest in the world; which did not rest on acts of debasement and disenfranchisement, but elevated the African, and was in the interest of human improvement; and which, by the law of the land, protected the negro in life and limb, and in many personal rights, and, by the practices of the system, bestowed upon him a sum of individual indulgences, which made him altogether the most striking type in the world of cheerfulness and contentment.⁷³

It is noteworthy that Pollard morally justifies slavery by arguing that it helped those enslaved, but he prefaces his argument by saying that “the moral question of slavery” should not be discussed. In short, Pollard’s defense of the institution is that the North was jealous of the South, it was good for capitalism, and that black people actually benefited from being enslaved.

This deemphasis of slavery is Pollard’s first line of defense in his revisionist history. Indeed, after the war, his narrative was that Southern citizens did not surrender their pride, courage, ideas, or being, but simply their weapons. He explains that “all that is left of the South

⁷³ Ibid., 48-49.

is the 'war of ideas.' She has thrown down the sword to take up the weapons of argument, not indeed under any banner of fanaticism, or to enforce a dogma, but simply to make the honourable conquest of reason and justice.”⁷⁴ In this case, the “war of ideas” involved the transition of the war from the battlefield to the pen. Although the South lost the physical war, it was going to win the intellectual one.

Pollard’s frustration with the Confederacy losing the Civil War is projected in his revisionist history. Throughout the 700 page book, he slanders the North as being jealous of the South, since the South is, according to him, superior in every way imaginable, from the conception of the United States to the end of the Civil War. He perpetuates the myth that the conflict between the North and South was always over states’ rights, not slavery, and that the Civil War was fought because of “Northern aggression.” The book whitewashes any event that puts the South in a bad light, it romanticizes Southern politicians and generals during the Confederacy, and it paints the Union government (especially Abraham Lincoln) and its military generals as bellicose and incompetent. How does a historian respond to an ideological work that pushes an alternate history, which is still prevalent today?

Pollard’s alternate history was successful enough during its time to demand an 1868 sequel, *The Lost Cause Regained*, a work in which Pollard significantly alters the argument from his first book. Whereas he briefly touched on slavery and race in the first book, in the sequel these are the central themes. In the introduction, he lays out his purpose of addressing these themes:

that the late war was much misunderstood in the South, and its true inspiration thereby lost or diminished, through the fallacy that Slavery was defended as a property tenure, or as a peculiar institution of labour; when the true grounds of defence was as of a barrier against a contention and war of races. That the greatest value of Slavery was as such a barrier.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 750.

That the war has done nothing more than destroy this barrier, and liberate and throw upon the country the ultimate question of the Negro.⁷⁵

Indeed, Pollard argues that it is fallacious to say that slavery was defensible as property ownership or as an institution of labor, both of which *were* used to defend slavery. Instead, he contends that slavery was used as a tool to prevent conflict and a race war between black and white people. Traditionally, racial tension was used as an argument against the abolitionists, not as an argument to defend slavery. It is Pollard who uses it in this way, which sets the stage for white supremacy: "...the question of the Negro practically couples or associates a revolutionary design upon the Constitution; and that the true question which the war involved, and which it merely liberated for greater breadth of controversy was the supremacy of the white race, and along with it the preservation of the political traditions of the country." He boasts that the South is newly revived and is prepared to defend white supremacy, writing, "that if she [the South] succeeds to the extent of securing the supremacy of the white man, and the traditional liberties of the country... she really triumphs in the true cause of the war, with respect to all its fundamental and vital issues."⁷⁶ This argument contradicts his first book in that Pollard is not only arguing that the war was fought over slavery, but also that it was a battle for white supremacy over black inferiority.

In many ways, white supremacy founded the United States, but the antebellum perception of race was connected to civilization, in that blacks were inferior not just because they were black, but because they were not civilized like whites. In the postbellum era, that perception changed. After Southern slaves were emancipated and granted citizenship (and the promise of constitutional rights with it), blacks were legally elevated to the position of whites.

⁷⁵ Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause Regained* (New York: G.W. Carleton & Co., 1868), 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

Consequently, this elevation undermined the established, systemic notion of white supremacy that the institution of slavery had maintained and, as a result, it threatened the belief that whites were naturally superior to blacks, especially when the defense for slavery was that it “civilized” slaves. This mindset did not vanish after the war, but instead transformed: blacks were no longer just inferior because they were uncivilized, but simply because they were black. Pollard was part of an increasingly prevalent belief in the legitimacy of biological racism and eugenics, sciences that would explode in the 1870s.

The transformation of racial perception is exemplified in Pollard’s interpretation of the equal rights clause in the Declaration of Independence. For some context, Pollard dedicates a whole chapter in *The Lost Cause Regained* to “the Negro question” and how blacks are, by nature and divine power, inferior to whites. He declares that “the thoughtful historian of America will find that the obvious visible inferiority of the Negro was constantly, although unconsciously, educating the people of the South to a disregard of the mere artificial distinctions of society, by the side of this great natural difference of races-- was, in fact, developing, by a process of comparison, the idea of equality as among men of the same race.” Indeed, Pollard argues that white Southerners understand black inferiority beyond “mere artificial distinctions of society,” demonstrating the shift in the perception of race from civilization to biology. The “process of comparison” he refers to is the Declaration’s “all men are created equal” statement: “Mr. Jefferson’s doctrine of equality as of men of the same race was merely the transfer to the domain of politics of that law of natural history which teaches us that all *the members of a species are equal*. The varieties within the boundaries of a single species are of no account in comparison with the differences as between distinct species.”⁷⁷ In short, Pollard maintains that blacks do not

⁷⁷ Ibid., 114-115.

apply to the Declaration since they are a different species, and the document only applies to differences in people of the same species. This is a markedly different argument about race than what Reginald Horsman argues, which connects race with civilization.

I conclude the analysis of Pollard with one of his main points I have not yet addressed: what he claims to be the “lost cause of the South.” He writes that if the “triumph” of securing white supremacy over blacks in the South is met, with “the South still retaining the Negro as a labourer, and keeping him in a condition where his *political* influence is as indifferent as when he was a slave,” then the loss of slavery’s capital value “is utterly insignificant, as the price of ‘the lost cause regained.’”⁷⁸ Pollard’s contention that the Confederacy fought a war for white supremacy is a great leap from his first publication. He bolsters this point by asserting that the South has a new purpose after the war: “this new cause-or rather the true question of the war revived-is the supremacy of the white race and along with it and strengthening it, the re-assertion of our political traditions, and the protection of our ancient fabrics of government.”⁷⁹ Pollard’s use of “political traditions” and “ancient fabrics” refers to slavery and white supremacy. The significance of Pollard is his historical revisionism that became dominant narrative in the South. He moved away from the position of his first book, a revisionism which claimed that the war had not been fought over slavery, to another revisionist interpretation that the Confederacy fought for white supremacy.

Origins of the Ku Klux Klan and Nathan Bedford Forrest

The Confederacy’s defeat in the Civil War produced the Ku Klux Klan, the most notorious domestic terrorist organization in our history. Many books have already been written

⁷⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 154.

about the history of the Klan, and I do not plan on rehashing that work, but a brief overview of its roots is important, as it inextricably links the Confederacy and violence against freed slaves in the South. In 1866, six Confederate veterans in Pulaski, Tennessee created the Ku Klux Klan, initially as a secret organization that had an immense desire to instill fear in former slavery, rather than physical harm, by dressing as dead or ghostly Confederate soldiers.⁸⁰ The organization rapidly expanded throughout Tennessee and into the surrounding states, but did not become visibly active until 1867 to 1868, two years when, politically, Democrats lost elections in state governments and were replaced by Republicans and the abolitionist oriented Radical Republicans. “It was this overturn of governments,” historian David Chalmers writes, “that made the Ku Klux Klan an important force in Southern life. In practically every one of the states in which the Klan rode, it sprang or expanded into active life with the advent of the new Radical governments of 1867 and 1868.”⁸¹ The Klan became a key opportunity for white Southerners to reclaim what little power they had.

The Klan soon planned to organize nationally. Historian Michael Newton records that a month after Congress passed the first of several Reconstruction Acts on March 2, 1867, the Klan in Pulaski called for a meeting, in which they declared, in secrecy, that the meeting’s purpose was “to reorganize the Klan on a plane corresponding to its size and present purposes; to bind the isolated Dens together; to secure unity of purpose and concert of action; to hedge the members up by such limitations and regulations as are best adapted to restrain them within proper limits; to distribute the authority among prudent men at local centers and exact from them a close supervision of those under their charge.” Because branches of the Klan were local and

⁸⁰ Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan: History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America’s Most Notorious Secret Society* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), 6.

⁸¹ David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1965), 11.

decentralized, the leadership believed it was time to connect local organizations and establish themselves as a national entity. What its “present purpose” was, Newton importantly reflects, was “guerrilla warfare against blacks, Republicans, and any other groups or individuals who jeopardized the vaunted ‘southern way of life,’ embodied in the antebellum economic system and the holy creed of white supremacy.”⁸²

Newton’s assertion is reaffirmed by the Klan’s appointment of former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest in May 1867, who already had a notorious reputation of violence. During the war, Forrest commanded Confederate troops in several battles, the most infamous which was the Battle of Fort Pillow on April 12, 1864. Forrest and his troops massacred surrendered and unarmed black and white Union troops, women, and children. The Northern paper *The New York Herald* first reported of the event on April 16 with the gripping headline: “IMPORTANT FROM THE MISSISSIPPI. Capture of Fort Pillow by the Rebels. Reported Massacre of the White and Black Troops. Women and Children Murdered in Cold Blood. The Dead and Wounded Negroes Burned.” The article briefly recounts the atrocity, telling of surrendered troops shot and bayoneted, defenseless wounded troops shot, dead bodies mutilated and burned, and children taken and shot in cold blood. “Out of the garrison of six hundred,” the *Herald* writes, only “two hundred remained alive.”⁸³

The account from *The Daily Confederate*, the Southern paper, also published on April 16, tells a vastly different story, and reveals a radically alternate interpretation of history. It reports the capture of Fort Pillow under the subtitle “From Alabama,” and dedicates just a single sentence to saying that the fort was captured, “and two regiments, eight to twelve hundred

⁸² Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 7-8.

⁸³ “Capture of Fort Pillow by the Rebels,” *New York Herald*, April 16, 1864, <https://bit.ly/2uPEM0R>.

negroes,” were also taken.⁸⁴ Even days later, there is no mention of the massacre from the *Confederate*. For example, on April 20, the paper reports that “the recent grand achievements at Shreveport and at Fort Pillow, we predict are but the precursors of still more glorious extensive results to our arms. Indeed, the Richmond Enquirer says the result at Fort Pillow is still more important and gratifying than the immediate achievement itself.”⁸⁵ Two days later, on April 22, the *Confederate* coldly celebrates the “victory” at Fort Pillow, with an article titled “Good News.” It only mentions that “the North papers received on yesterday, give fall and glorious confirmation of the victory and capture of Fort Pillow; their papers making our victory even more complete than did our own accounts.” In the same edition, the article, “Very Latest from the North: Full Confirmation of our Victory at Fort Pillow,” repeats verbatim the first article and then adds, proudly, “the Yankees confess to the annihilation of the garrison.” The article goes on to mention that a “butchery of whites and blacks” did occur, with a hint of celebration regarding the massacre, before moving on to other news.⁸⁶ The paper made sure to emphasize the fact that the Union soldiers refused two previous surrender flags before the massacre, presumably as an excuse that since the soldiers had refused to give up, their fate was to be left in their captors’ hands. The stark contrast between the Northern and Southern interpretation reveals two separate realities from the two warring countries.

But to really get a sense of this historical distortion, as well as what type of person Forrest truly was, we must dig deeper into the massacre than what the newspapers provide. A Congressional investigation sub-committee was launched to investigate what occurred at Fort Pillow, and found that the evidence was worse than the initial reporting. The *Herald* published

⁸⁴ “From Alabama,” *The Daily Confederate*, April 16, 1864, <https://bit.ly/36XgkZB>.

⁸⁵ “The Situation:,” *The Daily Confederate*, April 20, 1864, <https://bit.ly/2sojGps>.

⁸⁶ “Full Confirmation of Our Victory at Fort Pillow,” *The Daily Confederate*, April 22, 1864, <https://bit.ly/35UmWXA>.

the findings in its May 6th article, “THE FORT PILLOW MASSACRE. Three Hundred Human Beings Murdered in Cold Blood.” Men, women, and children were “beaten and hacked with sabres,” and some children were forced to stand for their own execution. The Confederate soldiers even went into the hospital, dragged out the wounded, and shot them without their resistance. More Union soldiers, fleeing from the fort, drowned in the river; others were ushered to the bank by the Confederates only to be shot down when they got on land. The *Herald* writes, “All around were heard cries of ‘No Quarter,’ ‘No quarter,’ ‘Kill the damned niggers,’ ‘Shoot them down.’” When wounded Union troops were unable to move from their tents, the Confederates set the tents on fire with them inside. The *Herald* chronicles that “one man was deliberately fastened down to the floor of a tent, face upwards, by means of nails driven through his clothing and into the boards under him, so that he could not possibly escape, and then the tent was set on fire. Another was nailed to the side of a building outside of the fort, and the building was set on fire and burned.” When it was over, the *Herald* concludes that “from three to four hundred are known to have been killed at Fort Pillow, of whom at least three hundred were murdered in cold blood.”⁸⁷

This account sets the stage for the Klan’s justification for Forrest’s crimes, as well as his appointment as the first national leader (or “Grand Wizard”). He had already demonstrated his capacity for brutality, and the unmitigated Southern hatred against African Americans, allowed him to continue violence under a new title. The South was already forgiving, if not downright celebrating, Confederate leaders and soldiers alike, and its resentment of the North and the newly freed black population permitted the Klan to proliferate and flourish throughout the Southern states.

⁸⁷ “The Fort Pillow Massacre,” *New York Herald*, May 6, 1864, <https://bit.ly/2svWVjE..>

The ultimate purpose of the Klan was to take action into its own hands in order to maintain the white hegemony that had been demolished with the abolition of slavery. We see this in the oaths that Klan initiates have to take, which contain the early remnants of fascist ideology. In a 1868 pamphlet warning Northerners about the Klan, one person recounts his experience of being initiated into the organization. He writes that the Captain of the Klan has the initiates repeat the oaths after him. The first oath reads:

By all the loved memories of my native land, by all the hallowed associations of home and family, by the memory of friends and brothers slain, by the lurid flames of war and desolation spread over our happy homes by the Lincoln hordes, I swear that by day-light and darkness, at all times and on all occasions, THE STEEL SHALL PAY THE DEBT OF STEEL, THE LEAD SHALL RECOMPENSE FOR LEAD, THE SOUTHERN CROSS SHALL YET DEFY THE WORLD!

According to Roger Griffin, this first oath contains the first half of his definition of fascism, *palingenesis*, or rebirth, which specifically refers to how the South will return and “yet defy the world.” The second oath reads:

By southern homes despoiled and broken, by southern women outraged, by the lingering torments of northern prisons, by all the desolation brought on our people by famine, pestilence and sword, I swear that DESOLATION SHALL ANSWER DESOLATION, PESTILENCE SHALL PAY FOR PESTILENCE, UNTIL THE SOUTHERN CRESCENT SPAN THE CONTINENT, AND CARRY OVER THE NORTH THE FURIES THAT HAVE DESOLATED THE SOUTH.

The second oath contains the second half of Griffin’s definition of fascism, *ultranationalism*, or nationalism expanding outside a nation’s defined borders, specifically noting how the “southern crescent” will span the continent. The third and final oath reads:

By all that is sacred, I swear to remember [Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall”] Jackson, and [Joseph E.] Johnston, and the thousands dead; the humiliation of [Jefferson] Davis, and [Robert E.] Lee, and [Braxton] Bragg, and [Pierre Gustave Toutant-] Beauregard; the noble deeds of Southrons [sic] on many a gory field; and by the memory of all these, I swear to be TRUE TO THE LONE STAR OF THE SOUTH, TILL

THESE AND ALL OUR WOES ARE A THOUSAND TIMES
AVENGED!⁸⁸

This third oath contains Renzo de Felice's definition of fascism, which is the exaltation of extraordinary leaders, and how only the revival of the South will avenge the fallen Confederate commanders and soldiers.

It is in these Klan oaths that we find both *palingenesis* and *ultranationalism*, the core definitions of fascism according to Griffin and de Felice. These oaths are palingenetic because they promise that the fallen Confederacy (i.e. "the South") "shall yet defy the world," implying the country will be revived. It also emphasizes revenge against the North, which can only be accomplished by rebuilding its lost nation. These oaths are also ultranationalist because they explicitly state that the Confederate flag will span the continent; it included spreading the Klan outside the South and encompassing every state from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Also, it is only through reviving the South that famous Confederates can be avenged, which demonstrates fascism's exaltation of extraordinary leaders. Furthermore, the fact that Forrest was chosen as the first national Klan leader, shows that brutal violence against those they deemed enemies was a primary option. The Klan, then, is the first proto-fascist organization in the United States.

Along with Griffin and de Felice's definitions, we also see that this rhetoric fits with Robert Paxton's definition. First, we see the Klan's obsession with community decline, humiliation, and victimization by the North; these fears are repeated by all white supremacist terrorist organizations at the time. Second, the Klan is a cult of unity, energy, and purity that bands together nationalist militants who abandon "democratic liberties and pursues redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion." Third, in Klan's first iteration, it controls political life in the South and forms an

⁸⁸ *The Oaths, Signs, Ceremonies and Objects of the Ku-Klux-Klan* (Cleveland: 1868), 12-14, <https://bit.ly/30pO4fC>.

“uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites,”⁸⁹ specifically with the Democratic party. The only problem with Paxton’s definition is that the Klan’s unity with the Democrats was in fact not “uneasy,” but was instead enthusiastic. Many Southern Democratic politicians participated in Klan and other terrorist organization’s activities.

With the combination of Edward Pollard’s *Lost Cause* books that argue a revisionist history, concluding that the Civil War was fought for white supremacy, and the origins of the Ku Klux Klan, started by Confederate veterans, it is clear that the Confederacy’s legacy is grounded in white supremacy. Furthermore, after its crushing defeat, with the Confederate states reduced to ruins, proto-fascist beliefs spread throughout the South. This became the Confederacy’s legacy. In the Scottish politician Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff observed that

the old organizations [of the South] which had existed before the war were again called into action, and murder, to say nothing of assault and battery, has been through the whole canvass an every-day matter in the States which were Secessia. I spoke of the old organization, for the Ku-Klux-Klan of which you have read is no new organization got up to resist unjust aggression. Before the war, the whole South was, as has been truly said, one vast Ku-Klux-Klan. The difference was, that before the war, the organization was so strong as to be irresistible; whereas now, although very strong, it is not irresistible.⁹⁰

Duff nicely summarizes the Klan’s attempt to reaffirm white supremacy. When the South lost and slavery was abolished, the Klan remained the last gasp of the Confederacy’s corpse: keep blacks under whites, particularly with violence.

The White League, the White Knights of Camelia, and the Red Shirts

The Ku Klux Klan was not the only terrorist organization that rose from the Confederacy’s ashes, demonstrating white supremacy’s broad appeal. These other groups

⁸⁹ Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (United States: Vintage Books, 2004): 218.

⁹⁰ Mountstuart E. Grant Duff, *A Political Survey* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1868), 127, <https://bit.ly/2tXU973>.

spontaneously cropped up in different regions of the South, and were highly effective in influencing local elections and terrorizing the local black population. In 1874, The White League formed in Louisiana. Much like the Klan, the League feared freed slaves ruling over them, and they created the myth that blacks had threatened “a war of races, which of all horrors we were most anxious to avoid and the Radicals [abolitionist Republicans] to precipitate, was imminent.” There was never such a threat. Under this fabricated danger, their reasons for existing was to preserve white supremacy, similar to the Klan:

with the single hope, then, as distinctly and openly declared, that a timely and proclaimed union of the whites, as a race, and their efficient preparation, might arrest the imminent danger of civil war, the WHITE LEAGUE was formed; its exclusive objective being, as publicly set forth in its platform, to assist in restoring an honest and intelligent government to the State of Louisiana, and by a union with all other good citizens, to maintain and defend the Constitution of the United States and of the State, and to protect the rights of all classes.⁹¹

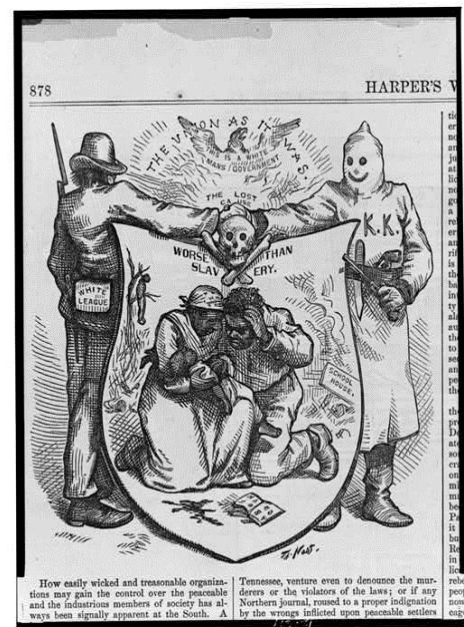
The reason why this fear was so palpable was that the White League believed that Southern whites were depraved, oppressed, defenseless, and anxious, and so were unprepared to defend themselves from black aggressors. Only with the White League’s power could order be established and the white population saved. An 1877 document about the Klan offers a straightforward description of the White League: “it was about this time [when the Klan came to Louisiana], or a little previously, that the famous White League came into existence, occupying the K. K. K. basis as to politics, and in all essentials of its organization formulated upon the same model.”⁹² If the White League is based on the Klan, then it is also a proto-fascist organization.

⁹¹ J. Dickson Bruns, *Address to the White League of New Orleans* (New Orleans: A. W. Hyatt Stationer and Printer, 1875), 5, <https://bit.ly/2RqlSWe>.

⁹² James Melville Beard, *K.K.K. Sketches, Humorous and Didactic, Treating the More Important Events of the Ku-Klux-Klan Movement in the South* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1877), 140, <https://bit.ly/2QTSdpc>.

This argument is reinforced by the fact that the White League formed an alliance with the Klan. Thomas Nast's famous 1874 cartoon published in *Harper's Weekly* encapsulates this relationship. The cartoon shows two men, one labeled "White League" and another dressed in a Klan robe, shaking hands over a skull and crossbones. The top of the picture says "THE UNION AS IT WAS," with the phrase "THE LOST CAUSE" directly over their handshake. Underneath the handshake is the phrase "WORSE THAN SLAVERY," referring to convict leasing, with a black man and woman, holding a child, cowering in fear from the men.⁹³ Nast's powerful photo encapsulates the shared objectives of the Klan, the White League, and Pollard's "Lost Cause," making them inseparable from each other.

A lesser known organization, also closely associated with the Klan, was the Knights of White Camelia. Its reign of terror was in counties where blacks were the majority, demonstrating how even a small local white population dominated areas in which they were the minority. The importance here is that when whites were outnumbered, it was vital to exercise power over the threat of the majority black population. The Knights were formed in 1867 by former Confederate Colonel Alcibiades DeBlanc in the Black Belt of Louisiana. Their reason for forming was the same as the White League: the Southern white population was suffering from former slaves and Northern despotism. Unlike the Klan and League, the Knights were exclusive



⁹³ Thomas Nast, *The Union As it Was, The Lost Cause, Worse Than Slavery*, illustration, *Harper's Weekly*, October 24, 1874, from Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, accessed January 8, 2020, <https://bit.ly/35UVGIg>.

to Louisiana and did not garner a national reputation. “The White Camelia was a Black Belt organization, rarely having branches in white counties,” one document records. “Consequently, it did not encroach to any great extent upon the territory of the Ku Klux Klan which operated principally in the white counties. On the border, the two orders sometimes existed side by side and cooperated in their work.”⁹⁴ The Knights were also a proto-fascist organization, if less public. Their objectives and rhetoric were analogous to other organizations, and its cooperation with the Klan demonstrates this point.

Finally, there is the Red Shirts whose redemption methods, like other terrorist organizations, included actively interfering in elections. The Democratic candidate for governor and former Confederate Lieutenant General, Wade Hampton, organized the South Carolina Red Shirts, a group that was “bent on ‘redeeming’ their state by any means necessary,” says historian Charles Lane.⁹⁵ Then-incumbent Republican governor Daniel Henry Chamberlain was ridiculed for not keeping peace in the state, but the one causing the unrest was his political opponent, Hampton. Chamberlain accused the Democrats and Hampton for interfering in the state’s politics:

General Hampton and his followers are seeking to profit politically by uttering this reproach [that Chamberlain is not protecting the state] and declaring their easy ability to maintain the peace of the state. I shall answer your demand with perfect plainness of speech. The reason I cannot and do not maintain the peace of the state and suppress lawlessness and prevent terrorism, is solely because the democratic party are the authors of the disturbances of the peace, the lawlessness and terrorism which they now reproach me with and demand that I allow or invite them to suppress.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ *The Constitution and the Ritual of The Knights of the White Camelia* (West Virginia: 1904), 6, <https://bit.ly/2NJvlgD>.

⁹⁵ Charles Lane, *The Day Freedom Died: The Colfax Massacre, The Supreme Court, and the Betrayal of Reconstruction* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008), 247.

⁹⁶ Daniel H. Chamberlain, *Letter of Gov. Chamberlain to the Chairman of the State Democratic Executive Committee* (South Carolina: 1876), 15, <https://bit.ly/2srTtGB>.

Chamberlain was in a difficult position. To take care of Hampton, the terrorist problem, meant that he would have had to eliminate his political rival, Hampton, which would have been politically disastrous. It was a lose-lose scenario in an election where politics and terrorism were inextricably linked.

The South Carolina election of 1876 was so tumultuous that Congress created a select committee to investigate the election results in the state. The committee found that Democrats were engaged in numerous undemocratic methods that led to Hampton's victory. Their findings were published in two parts on February 21, 1877. In the first part, the committee found little voter interference on the Republican side. In the second part, however, it found overwhelming evidence of voting fraud by Democrats and violence geared towards African Americans and Republicans. Indeed, "fraudulent voting was practiced extensively by democrats, and in the interest of democrat candidates, and that the instances of fraudulent voting by republicans were so rare that they could not affect the election of any candidate for the smallest office in and precinct; so rare as to be utterly insignificant when compared with the carefully devised, systematic, wide-spread fraudulent voting by democrats."⁹⁷ Under the subtitle "WHITE PEOPLE PROPERTY-OWNERS, COLORED PEOPLE LESSERS AND EMPLOYE[E]S, COLORED PEOPLE ORDERLY AND UNARMED; THE DEMOCRATS ARMED," the committee found numerous instances of attacks and murder by Democrats. They record all instances under "II.-- PROSCRIPTION AND VIOLENCE IN VARIOUS FORMS," following a pointed list of each event: 1) "*Land-owners notifying lessers to leave premise*," - blacks who voted Republican were forced off the owner's land; 2) "*Proscription by refusal to give republicans employment*," - not employing anybody who votes Republican; 3) "*Proscription of republicans by withholding*

⁹⁷ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Recent Election in South Carolina*, 44th Cong., 2nd sess., 1877, report 175, part 2, 14, <https://bit.ly/35VCKZV>.

patronage,” - economically limiting and boycotting Republicans; 4) “*Social proscriptions of republicans*,” - socially ostracizing Republicans; 5) “*By displaying of armed force and threat of personal violence by day and by night*,” - brandishing weapons and threatening blacks and Republicans; 6) “*Intimidation by firing upon the houses of colored people at night*,” - striking fear into blacks to stop them from voting; 7) “*Individual murders of republicans*,” - by Democrats; and, finally, 8) “*Massacre of republicans -- riot and bloodshed*,” - specifically referring to the “Hamburgh Slaughter,” the Ellenton Massacre, and the Charleston and Cainhoy riots, all in 1876.⁹⁸ Hampton’s unscrupulous methods were successful, and reaffirmed that the use of aggression was crucial for these terrorist organizers to gain political power.

Four things link the Klan, the League, the Knights, and the Red Shirts together. First, these organizations were all created by Confederate veterans; second, they had the same palingenetic ultranationalist rhetoric to revive the Confederacy; third, they reflect Paxton’s definition of fascism, obsession with victimization; and fourth, these organizations all viciously oppressed the black community. It is not simply a coincidence that after the Civil War, former Confederate veterans, including ones in high military positions, would form proto-fascist groups with the intent to revive their fallen country and to expand the South’s “cause” across the United States. Additionally, according to Robert Paxton, all these groups were deeply obsessed with community decline, humiliation, and victimhood, and all were cults of unity, energy, and purity that banded together nationalist militants. The South, then, as it stood in the postbellum-nineteenth century, was dominated by proto-fascist organizations.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 38-46.

Violence Against African Americans During Reconstruction

What makes the white supremacist organizations in the South terrorist organizations is the well-documented violence, murders, lynchings, riots, and massacres against the black population in the postbellum-nineteenth century. While many of these events have already been chronicled by historians, it is necessary to review the events in order to grasp what kind of environment black communities had to endure in the United States, particularly in the South. Historian Manfred Berg writes that “according to one estimate, between 1868 and 1871 alone the Klan may have killed as many as twenty thousand freed people.”⁹⁹ This figure does not include the other white supremacist organizations that were profusely scattered throughout the South and, as a result, there are certainly many more unrecorded victims. In the notorious Lynching Era of post-Reconstruction, Berg states that “the most conservative estimates, slightly more than 4,700 persons were lynched” between the early 1880s and World War II. “Seventy-three percent of all victims were blacks,” and more than 80 percent of all lynchings occurred in the South.¹⁰⁰ These numbers include only the incidents that were recorded.

Beyond the lynching of individuals, there were also some instances of mob violence against large groups of African Americans and, at times, white Republicans. The *New York Times* June 29, 1866 report on a government investigation of the Memphis Riots from May 1-4 found that a riot started between a group of black soldiers organized in the town square and the local police who attempted to break them up. It quickly spread to the whole city. The article states that “the number [of blacks] already ascertained as killed is about thirty, and the number wounded about fifty,” and that “all crimes imaginable were committed, from simple larceny to

⁹⁹ Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 87.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

rape and murder,” against the black population in Memphis.¹⁰¹ Another riot broke out in New Orleans on July 30 that same year. The *Times* reported that “about one hundred negroes have been killed, and also twenty-five whites, including several Policemen.”¹⁰² In this instance, a mob of white citizens and policemen attacked African Americans who were working on the Constitutional Convention for Louisiana to reinstate the state into the Union.

While those two massacres were conducted by white locals, later massacres were committed by white supremacist terrorist organizations. Since the atrocities committed by the Klan have been largely documented, I will focus on the worst events conducted by other groups. The *New York Herald* reported on October 12, 1868, that in the span of two days, over 100 African Americans were killed and 50 injured in Opelousas, Louisiana.¹⁰³ The *New Orleans Republican* reported on October 5 that the massacre was conducted by the Opelousas “Seymore Knights,” a branch of the White Knights of Camelia.¹⁰⁴ The most notorious act of violence, the Colfax Massacre, occurred when the white locals, including sheriff Cristopher Nash, attacked African Americans in Colfax, Louisiana. The *Herald* reports that “eighty or a hundred of them were killed and many wounded.”¹⁰⁵ Nash was later credited as the one who formed the White League in 1874. Finally, in September 1876, a riot broke out during the South Carolina state election. The *Herald* reported on October 11 that “it is believed that not less than fifty and probably more than 100 were killed.”¹⁰⁶ The *New York Tribune* reported on October 25 that the massacre was conducted by the “rifle clubs” in South Carolina, also known as the Red Shirts.

¹⁰¹ “The Memphis Riots,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1866, <https://bit.ly/2uPKIqF>.

¹⁰² “Great Riot,” *New York Times*, July 31, 1866, <https://bit.ly/2uSTDrt>.

¹⁰³ “The New Rebellion,” *New York Herald*, October 12, 1868, <https://bit.ly/2TxY6tI>.

¹⁰⁴ “Riot in St. Landry,” *New Orleans Republican*, October 5, 1868, <https://bit.ly/2NruMl6>.

¹⁰⁵ “A War of Races in Louisiana- The Bloody Affair at Colfax,” *New York Herald*, April 17, 1873, <https://bit.ly/2TtHW4z>.

¹⁰⁶ “Notes on the Conflict- The Exaggeration of the Death Toll- The Cause of the Exaggeration- The Wrecking of the Train- Some Incidents of the Little War- The Spirit of the Negroes,” *New York Herald*, October 11, 1876, <https://bit.ly/2RjSAbz>.

The participants yelled at federal troops (who were deployed in response to the violence) that “they had intended to ‘kill the last one of the niggers,’” and that ““they intended to carry the election [for the Democrats] and kill every colored Republican who would not vote the Democrat ticket.””¹⁰⁷ This was the election when the Democrat, Wade Hampton, won the election by leading the Red Shirts.

What made these events more horrific than they already were was the fact that many of the participants and murderers went unprosecuted. In essence, because so many perpetrators of the lynchings and massacres escaped the judicial system, there were never any consequences for their violence. The general, unwritten rule of the South was that blacks were open targets so long as the whole white community participated. Even the local police ignored or actively participated in racial violence, escaping justice as well. The federal government failed to protect blacks in the South, and the consequences were the proliferation of white supremacy terrorist organizations that conducted lynchings and massacres of black communities; lynching did not become a federal crime until 2018.¹⁰⁸

Forcing African Americans Back Into Slavery

Slavery, an inherently totalitarian institution, did not end after the Civil War. Instead, it morphed into fascist legislation and institutions that were slavery in everything except name. They were fascist in that their intended purpose was to revive a white hegemonic state by criminalizing and imprisoning African Americans. Two Southern legislative acts responsible for

¹⁰⁷ “Gov. Chamberlain’s Letter. To the Editor of The Tribune,” *New York Tribune*, October 25, 1876, <https://bit.ly/30mL6sB>.

¹⁰⁸ Mihir Zaviri, “Senate Unanimously Passed Bill Making Lynching a Federal Crime,” *New York Times*, December 20, 2018, <https://nyti.ms/38aQB0a>.

this new form of slavery were the infamous Black Codes and convict leasing in the prison system.

While Black Codes existed in every state, the ones passed in the South after the Civil War not only tried to limit the rights of the newly-freed slaves, but also attempted to return them to a state of servitude. Each state had its own variation of the Black Codes, but Mississippi's legislation, passed in 1865 after the war, exemplified other Southern state policies. Its legislation, "An Act to Confer Civil Rights on Freedmen, and for other purposes," restricted the social, property, and labor rights of African Americans. We will focus on the labor aspects since it was connected to the more egregious issue of convict leasing. Section 6 of the legislation reads:

...all contracts for labor made with freedmen, free Negroes, and mulattoes, for a longer period than one month shall be in writing or duplicate, attested and read to said freedman, free Negro, or mulatto, by a beat, city, or county officer, or two disinterested white persons of the county in which the labor is to be performed, of which each party shall have one; and said contracts shall be taken and held as entire contracts, and if the laborer shall quit the service of the employer, before expiration of his term of service, without good cause, he shall forfeit his wages for that year, up to the time of quitting.

In short, if a white employer employed African Americans for longer than a month, and if these employees quit or abandoned the contract at any time, they forfeited their entire wage for the year. In addition to section 6, which threatened financial consequences for quitting, section 7 actually criminalized quitting entirely:

...every civil officer shall, and every person may arrest and carry back to his or her legal employer any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto, who shall have quit the service of his or her employer before the expiration of his or her term of service without good cause, and said officer and person shall be entitled to receive for arresting and carrying back every deserting employee aforesaid...: Provided that said arrested party after being so returned may appeal to a justice of the peace or member of the board of police of the county, who on notice to the alleged employer, shall try summarily whether said appellant is legally employed by the alleged employer and has good cause to quit said employer; either party shall have the right of appeal to the county court, pending which the alleged deserter shall be remanded to the alleged employer, or otherwise

disposed of, as shall be right and just, and the decision of the county court shall be final.

Not only, then, did section 6 penalize quitting, section 7 meant that if African Americans quit their jobs, they were to be arrested, put on trial, and returned to the employer to finish out the contract. Although the employees legally had the right to appeal, it was highly unlikely that the white judge would have deemed any reason to quit as a “good cause.”

Even further, Section 8 states that if African Americans fled from their job, most likely to escape brutal conditions, they were to be arrested and returned to their employer. It reads:

...upon affidavit made by the employer of any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto, or other credible person, before any justice of the peace or member of the board of police, that any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto, legally employed by said employer, has illegally deserted said employment, such justice of the peace or member of the board of police, shall issue his warrant or warrants, returnable before himself, or other such officer, directed to any sheriff, constable or special deputy, commanding him to arrest said deserter and return him or her to said employer, and the like proceedings shall be had as provided in the preceding section.¹⁰⁹

African American could not quit without losing pay, and even if they did, they were forced to return and work. If they fled, they were simply arrested and returned. We should note that these legislative sections specifically target non-whites. The Black Codes essentially enforced the rules of slavery under the guise of voluntary employment. The predominately white employers owned the workers, who were predominantly black.

If, for whatever reason, these codes were not enough to keep African Americans pressed under the white thumb, Mississippi passed another bill in 1865 that criminalized all activities of African Americans. The law “An Act to Amend the Vagrant Laws of the State” criminalized

¹⁰⁹ “An Act to Confer Civil Rights on Freedmen, and for other purposes,” EBSCOhost, accessed January 13, 2020, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=21212581&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

unemployment and activities such as loitering and assembling, and were written vaguely enough so that anything blacks did was deemed as “vagrancy.” Section 1 states that

all rogues and vagabonds, idle and dissipated persons, beggars, jugglers, or persons practicing unlawful games or plays, runaways, common drunkards, common night-walkers, pilferers, lewd, wanton, or lascivious persons in speech or behavior, common railers and brawlers, persons who neglect their calling or employment, misspend what they earn, or do not provide for the support of themselves or their families or dependents, and all other idle and disorderly persons, including all who neglect all lawful business, or habitually misspend their time by frequenting houses of ill-fame, gaming-houses, or tippling shops, shall be deemed and considered vagrants under the provisions of this act, and on conviction thereof shall be fined not exceeding one hundred dollars, with all accruing costs, and be imprisoned at the discretion of the court not exceeding ten days.

The breadth and openness of these conditions gave white officials license to abuse the system; they fined and imprisoned African Americans with impunity. But the legislation does not stop there. Section 2 criminalized unemployment in that,

...all freedmen, free Negroes, and mulattoes in this State, over the age of eighteen years, found on the second Monday of January, 1866, or thereafter, with no lawful employment or business, or found unlawfully assembling themselves together either in the day or night time, and all white persons so assembling with freedmen, free Negroes, or mulattoes, or usually associating with freedmen, free Negroes, or mulattoes on terms of equality, or living in adultery or fornication with a freedwoman, free Negro, or mulatto, shall be deemed vagrants.¹¹⁰

In addition to the previous law that restricted African American’s ability to quit or flee from employers, under this section, if any African American was not employed, they were deemed a vagrant and were subsequently fined and imprisoned. Not only, then, could African Americans not escape from work, but they were criminalized if they did not take up employment at all. It was purposefully a catch-22 system to try and force the black population to work for the white population, effectively returning them to slavery.

¹¹⁰ “An Act to Amend the Vagrant Laws of the State,” EBSCOhost, accessed January 13, 2020, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=21213061&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

Unfortunately, being imprisoned did not mean an escape from forced labor. The Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution explicitly allows for slavery to be used as a punishment for anybody convicted of a crime. Consequently, anybody swept into the judicial system and sentenced to jail could be subjected to such a punishment. Just like the vagrancy laws, however, African Americans were predominantly the main targets. Southern states forced prisoners into labor through convict leasing, a process where the government signs a contract with a private employer to house, clothe, and feed prisoners while they perform labor. Douglas A. Blackmon writes in *Slavery By Another Name* how “in almost every respect- the acquisition of workers, the lease arrangements, the responsibilities of the leaseholder to detain and care for them, the incentives for good behavior- convict leasing adopted practices almost identical to those emerging in slavery in the 1850s.” He also documents that convict leasing was “obsessed with ensuring disparate treatment of blacks, who at all times in the ensuing fifty years would constitute 90 percent or more of those sold into labor.”¹¹¹ Indeed, in 1871 the state of Arkansas handed over convicts to the employer Nathan Bedford Forrest, four years after he had become the Grand Wizard of the Klan.¹¹² Convict leasing was simply another way to enslave blacks.

The working and living conditions under convict leasing were only slightly different than slavery. Under slavery, a person was monetarily valuable, meaning a slavemaster would lose money if the slave became disabled or died. Under convict leasing, however, labor was free and easily replaceable, and the results were devastating. Blackmon states that “in the first two years that Alabama leased its prisoners, nearly 20 percent of them died. In the following year, mortality rose to 35 percent. In the fourth, nearly 45 percent were killed.”¹¹³ Convict leasing was

¹¹¹ Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black People in America From the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 57.

¹¹² Ibid., 55.

¹¹³ Ibid., 57.

merely an excuse to return African Americans to a state of slavery and punish them for originally escaping it. To highlight the racism of convict leasing, [PUT ALABAMA STOPPED DOING IT TO WHITES BECAUSE IT WAS TOO CRUEL].

The Southern states accomplished their goal. For a time, the black population was once forced to work for whites. Labor and vagrancy laws were restrictive barriers that controlled virtually every action of a black person. If they defied the system, the consequence was convict leasing, slavery by another name. The power behind these practices came from the endorsement of state governments and the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. Even today it is not just a state-by-state or regional issue, but a national one.

Anti-Democratic Policies

Fascism is inherently anti-democratic, for its practices and oppression of the targeted “other” cannot function in a democratic system. The struggle to maintain white supremacy involved fighting against democratic policies that granted African Americans basic constitutional and democratic rights. This fight is demonstrated best in the debate over the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. It was not a regional divide between North and South, but a political divide, with Democrats, including President Andrew Johnson, opposing the amendment, and Republicans for it. The Fourteenth Amendment secured the citizenship and constitutional rights to freed slaves, and Democrats fought against it, openly denying them citizenship and political power.

Democratic party opposition to the Fourteenth Amendment is embodied in Georgia’s state legislature’s dissent of the amendment. Governor Charles J. Jenkins wrote a message to the Georgia State Congress that voiced, “whether the objective in proposing this change be the

extension of the elective franchise to persons of African descent, (nearly all of whom are notoriously unqualified for it,) or a further diminution of the already relatively small weight of the Southern States in the administration of the Government, the adoption of this amendment will certainly force upon them a choice between those evils.”¹¹⁴ The passage of the Fourteenth Amendment was because of the former reason, and it shows that his opposition is rooted in the enfranchisement of African Americans. If we harken back to Edward Pollard’s *The Lost Cause*, his fears were rooted in “black supremacy,” or black legislatures controlling the state government. To prevent this, then, they would have to oppose any efforts that would give blacks democratic rights.

Other Democrats, such as Representative Andrew Rogers of New Jersey, were more explicit with their opposition. He remarks, “...take South Carolina and the other three States whose negroes constitute a majority of the population [Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama]. By the passage of this joint resolution you strip them of more than one half of the whole representation for which their fathers, side by side with the men of the North, shed their blood; that blood which now glows in the veins of us, their descendants.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, states that had a majority African American population would *lose* representation if they were granted the right to vote, since it would likely overrule white votes. He continues,

yet the ruling party [the Republicans] is not content with robbing the South of millions of dollars invested in slaves and nearly ruining the country to free them, but they seek to inflict a disgrace upon the Anglo-Saxon race of the South by coercing them to bestow upon these slaves political rights after they have been taken away from their masters without compensation. I think it time [sic] that we should begin to legislate for white people.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *Journal of the Senate of the State of Georgia at the Annual Session of the General Assembly, Begun and Held in Milledgeville, the Seat of Government, 1866* (Georgia: J.W. Burke & Co., Stationers and State Interns, 1866), 6, <https://bit.ly/2U12ywi>.

¹¹⁵ F.J. Rives, *The Congressional Globe: Containing The Debate and Proceedings of the First Session of the Thirty-Ninth Congress* (Washington: Congressional Globe Office, 1866), 355, <https://bit.ly/2RLBiFW>.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 356.

Rogers' language demonstrates how he still views freed slaves as property to the South, as slaves that were wrongfully taken from their owners, not as people. Furthermore, by saying black suffrage is a "disgrace" to the Anglo-Saxon race speaks volumes in itself. If his opposition wasn't brazen enough, he also argues that "the right to vote is a privilege. The right to marry is a privilege. The right to contract is a privilege. The right to be a juror is a privilege. The right to be a judge or President of the United States is a privilege."¹¹⁷ Rogers' contradictory language, saying "rights" are "privileges," clearly demonstrates his attempt at undermining democratic rights for blacks. Democracy, to Rogers, is a privilege.

Rejecting the Fourteenth Amendment was only part of the actions taken to prevent the enfranchisement of African Americans. Returning to the vagrancy law passed in Mississippi, poll taxes were implemented directly against the black population. Section 6 of the vagrancy law reads, "...in order to secure a support for such indigent freedmen, free Negroes, and mulattoes, it shall be lawful, and it is hereby made the duty of the boards of county police of each county in this State, to levy a poll or capitation tax on each and every freedmen, free Negro, or mulatto, between the ages of eighteen and sixty years, not to exceed the sum of one dollar annually." The poll tax could not be dodged, either, for section 7 states that "if any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto shall fail, or refuse to pay any tax levied according to the provisions of the sixth section of this act, it shall be prima facie evidence of vagrancy."¹¹⁸ Since African Americans were predominantly poor in the South, either they could not afford the poll tax and could not vote, or faced the threat of jail for not paying the tax.

¹¹⁷ F.J. Rives, *The Congressional Globe: Containing the Debates and Proceedings of the First Session of the Thirty-Ninth Congress* (Washington: Congressional Globe Office, 1866), 2538, <https://bit.ly/392MS5j>.

¹¹⁸ EBSCOhost, "Vagrant Laws," <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=21213061&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

Some states even put the poll tax in their state constitutions. Harvey Walker writes that, by 1923, Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Virginia had state constitutional amendments for a poll tax. Additionally, Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming had poll taxes in passed legislation.¹¹⁹ Many of the Southern States taxes were enacted near the end of Reconstruction, while many of the Northern and Western states were enacted in the early twentieth century. What this demonstrates is that the disenfranchisement of the poor - predominantly African Americans - was a national problem. Even as these taxes violated the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment, it wouldn't be until the Twenty-Fourth Amendment, ratified in 1964, would the disenfranchisement effort end.

We must now return to the violence committed against African Americans by white supremacist terrorist groups. The Klan, White League, Knights of Camelia, and Red Shirts actively interfered in elections to help Democrats get elected and to suppress the voting strength of African Americans. They would show up to the polls, armed and in uniform, and chase out or kill anybody who would vote for the Republican ticket. This was the driving motivation behind the “Hamburgh Slaughter” and the Ellenton massacre, previously mentioned in the House of Representatives’ report on the 1876 South Carolian election. As a reminder, participants in the Ellenton massacre stated that ““they intended to carry the election [for the Democrats] and kill

¹¹⁹ Harvey Walker, “The Poll Tax in the United States,” *The Bulletin of the National Tax Association* 9, no. 2 (November 1923): 47-48, <https://bit.ly/397SbjZ>.

every colored Republican who would not vote the Democrat ticket.”¹²⁰ The best way to prevent African Americans from voting was to threaten and harm them.

These terrorist organizations were not exclusively killing blacks because of their race. Instead, the fear of “black supremacy,” or just blacks controlling the government (especially in the few states where African Americans were a majority), was a large motivator. A black Republican government would actively undermine the white Democrat hegemony that was the South. Furthermore, these organizations were politically active, and their motives were politically driven, hence why they are labeled as terrorists. Because Republicans, especially Radical abolitionist Republicans, were trying to enfranchise freed slaves, the organization’s efforts were exclusively to benefit Democrats. Much of the speeches and literature published by them resoundingly denounce Republicans and support Democrats. It should not be forgotten, either, that before the Civil War, the South was controlled by Democrats. Afterwards, the former Confederates, including those that formed terrorist organizations, would continue to support the Democratic ticket.

The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans

One thing that I have not addressed yet is the exaltation of extraordinary personalities, or a cult of personality around the Confederate leaders, according to Renzo de Felice’s definition of fascism. Part of why I held off until now to talk about this factor is that, although the glorification of the Confederates may have started immediately after the war, organizations dedicated to remembering the Confederacy started decades later. The vast majority of Confederate memoranda - for example, statues, symbols, and holidays - were established across

¹²⁰ “Gov. Chamberlain’s Letter. To the Editor of The Tribune,” *New York Tribune*, October 25, 1876, <https://bit.ly/30mL6sB>.

the nation in the 1900s and 1910s during the Lynching Era. More were established in the 1950s and 1960s in response to the Civil Rights Movement at its height, and some have even been established in the twenty-first century.

The first organization established to memorialize the Confederacy was the United Daughters of the Confederacy, where membership required blood or marital connections to Confederate veterans. Their first convention was held in Nashville, Tennessee in November, 1895.¹²¹ It has four objectives: first, social, or to connect the children of Confederate veterans together; second, benevolence, or to take care of Confederate veterans and their families; third, educational, or to provide grants for education for members; and fourth, historical. Much like other Confederate sympathisers, the United Daughters try to whitewash history, ignoring that the Confederacy fought for slavery. One document reads that “it is due to the efforts of the U. D. C. that many objectionable terms have been removed from text books, that modern historians have corrected false statements, particularly with regard to the character of Jefferson Davis; removing at last from his name the stigma of ‘traitor’” because he was taught “supreme allegiance to the State” at West Point before the war. Indeed, the United Daughters altered school textbooks to ignore the fact that Jefferson Davis fought against the United States federal government, which is, by definition, traitorous. It continues that having “a calmer estimate of the life of Robert E. Lee permits his statue to stand beside that of Washington in the National Capitol.” The United Daughters exalt Lee’s personality to the point where his statue should be in the capital of the government he fought against.¹²²

¹²¹ Anne Bachman Hyde, *An Historical Account of the United Daughters of the Confederacy: Origin, Objects and Purposes* (Little Rock: Memorial Chapter No. 48, 1919), 6, <https://bit.ly/2Saplbs>.

¹²² Ibid., 20.

The United Daughters also has an opinion on “The Lost Cause.” It states that “...the U. D. C. deprecates the use of the phrase, ‘The Lost Cause,’ feeling that a cause may be defeated, but not lost, and that a principle which was just and true cannot die.”¹²³ As we have already established, the Confederacy’s “Lost Cause” was white supremacy and slavery, literally written by the man who coined the term, Edward A. Pollard. However, we must give the United Daughters the benefit of the doubt, since it is likely Pollard’s first book, *The Lost Cause*, was more popular than his sequel, *The Lost Cause Regained*, and the United Daughters based their opinion on the former. But the United Daughters are still trying to cover up the fact that the Confederacy fought the Civil War for slavery and exalt Confederate leaders to be larger than life.

The United Daughters have a fifth purpose as well, and perhaps the strongest: memorial. Its motive is simple: “...to give a sepulchre to their [Daughters of Confederate Veterans] dead.” Stirred by restless thoughts into action, they “began the work which will not cease until every State and city and town records in marble and bronze the resting place of their heroes.” In memorializing Confederate leaders, they wish to let future generations know that “the immortals once walked on earth as men.”¹²⁴ Not only do the United Daughters exalt Confederate soldiers, they also greatly exalt the Confederate leaders, Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, “Stonewall” Jackson, James Ewell Brown Stuart, and Wade Hampton to mythic proportions. The United Daughters swear to remember leaders just like the Klan and other terrorist organizations, only with a softer tone.

Confederate women were not the only ones inspired to memorialize their past. Formed in 1896, the Sons of Confederate Veterans (previously named the United Confederate Veterans) is the male version of organized Confederate descendants. Their Constitution elaborates on their

¹²³ Ibid., 12.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 27-28.

objectives: section 2 states that “the objects and purposes of this Organization shall be strictly ‘Historical and Benevolent;’” section 6 states that they are “to gather authentic data, statistics documents, reports, plans, maps and other material for an impartial history of the Confederate states; to collect and preserve relics and mementoes of the war; to make and perpetuate a record of the services of every member of the United Confederate Veterans, and all other living Confederate Veterans, and as far as possible, of those of their comrades who have preceded them into eternity;” and section 8 states they are “to urge and aid the erection of enduring monuments to our great leaders and heroic soldiers, sailors, and people, and to mark with suitable headstones the graves of Confederate dead wherever found.”¹²⁵ The Sons of Confederate Veterans, along with the United Daughters, are responsible for the majority of the memorials we see in contemporary times.

The Sons have a more sinister objective published in their “Gray Book.” The introduction best says it: “the reasons for the Gray Book are purely defensive and on behalf of the truth of history, and the call for this publication comes from attacks, past, present and continuing, upon the history, people and institutions of this Southern section of our united country.” These “attacks” they are referring to are the ones about how the Confederacy fought for slavery. It reads, “is it not a repulsive thought that any mind could be so constituted as to believe that Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnson and Stonewall Jackson fought their immortal fight to hold some negroes in slavery!”¹²⁶ While it can be debated whether the North fought for unity and that emancipation was a side objective, their arguments do not address that, at the time of the Civil War, Northern states were free (with the exception of border states) and Southern states were

¹²⁵ *Constitution of the United Sons of Confederate Veterans* (St. Louis: WM. F. Rower & Co Printers, 1902), 4, <https://bit.ly/2Sc04z3>.

¹²⁶ *The Gray Book* (Gray Book Committee S. C. V.), 4, <https://bit.ly/31Ay8bj>.

not. Furthermore, Lee, Johnson and Jackson did fight for blacks to be enslaved. Their other assertion is that “The South [is] Not Responsible for Slavery,” arguing that slavery was used by other countries before the United States and that the North also had slavery and participated in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. It reads, “it was a boast and a taunt” before the Civil War that ““The North imported slaves, the South only bought them.””¹²⁷ First, it is true that other countries participated in the slave trade, and it is also true that the North imported and used slaves in the country’s early stages. What this does not explain, however, is how the North abolished slavery and the South kept it. Second, the South most definitely imported slaves. But it does not matter who brought slaves over first; instead, what matters is who kept slavery as an institution and then fought a war to maintain it. The Gray Book is another revisionist piece of work that exonerates the Confederacy of its known purpose.

The two organization’s efforts to establish memorials paid off: The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) identified “1,747 Confederate Monuments, place names and other symbols still in public spaces, both in the South and across the nation.”¹²⁸ The SPLC has a graph that shows how, after the two organizations formed, an overwhelming amount of Confederate memorials were established between 1900 and 1920, during the notorious Jim Crow and Lynching Era. A large number of memorials were also established between 1921 and 1945, and more memorials were placed between 1950 and 1970 at the height of the Civil Rights era. What is alarming, however, is that Confederate memorials continue to be established into the twenty-first century, demonstrating that the efforts of the United Daughters and Sons of Confederate Veterans are still not over to this day.¹²⁹ The exaltation of Confederate leaders is astounding, and

¹²⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹²⁸ “Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy,” Publication, Southern Poverty Law Center, last modified February 1, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2tGYXxZ..>

¹²⁹ Ibid., <https://bit.ly/2Sa3IJK>.

Robert de Felice's definition of fascism is the only explanation for why leaders and soldiers alike are "immortal" in the eyes of the Sons and Daughters.

Conclusion

What we see is the South rapidly develop proto-fascist rhetoric and tendencies with the fall of the Confederacy. The South's way of life and economy rooted in slavery was toppled, and there was a resounding cry among the Confederates to revive and restore the Confederacy to its former glory. Palingenetic ultranationalism dominated the South during Reconstruction; it is in the motivation behind a large portion of the South's political actions. In particular, the Democratic party in the South survived the Civil War, and soon enough it became the party of the Confederacy.

My focus so far has been on the South, but it should not be forgotten that racism and violence against minorities was not exclusive to African Americans or exclusive to the South. Everywhere in the country were policies that limited the freedom of blacks. We only hear of the South because of its explicit violence against them. Furthermore, racism extended to anybody who was not a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. The genocide of the Native Americans continued during this time. Anti-Catholic sentiments, geared towards German and Irish immigrants, were rife in the North. In the West there was xenophobia against Chinese immigrants. For example, on October 25, 1871 in Los Angeles, California, after a confrontation with local Chinese residents and the police that resulted in one officer killed, a white mob formed, stormed the neighborhood where the Chinese residents lived and hanged fifteen of them.¹³⁰ There was also the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that barred any Chinese immigrants from entering the country for a

¹³⁰ "From San Francisco," *The Daily Dispatch*, October 26, 1871, <https://bit.ly/37MyCNM>.

decade, which was centralized in California but was passed in Washington D.C.. Animosity toward non-whites was not exclusive to one region in the United States, but was a national feeling among whites.

All the aforementioned white supremacy organizations- the Ku Klux Klan, the White League, the Knights of White Camelia, and the Red Shirts - were created by Confederate veterans. Since Confederates established that their country's legacy was one of white supremacy, as told by Edward Pollard, it is only sensible, then, that the Confederates would form terrorist organizations that actively lynched and massacred African Americans. What makes them especially dangerous was their active participation with the Democratic party to maintain white supremacy and to return the black population to slavery. Terrorist organizations are inherently political, but they actively controlled the political life of the South for decades. Historian Hasan Kwame Jeffries' *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* recounts the tight grip white supremacy had.¹³¹ When the black population was freed in 1865, through the use of lynchings and threats by whites, by 1966, in Lowndes County, Alabama, "there were five thousand African Americans of voting age in the overwhelmingly black rural county, but not a single one was registered."¹³² A century after the Civil War, African Americans were still under threat from extralegal action and were denied any democratic rights.

White supremacy terrorist organizations did not die out in the nineteenth century, either. The Klan, after briefly being stifled by federal efforts, revived itself in the 1910s and 1920s with its second iteration. They produced their most infamous film work in 1915, *The Birth of a Nation*, depicting the Ku Klux Klan saving the United States and, more particularly, white

¹³¹ See Hasan Kwame Jeffries *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 7-38 for a local description of violence and oppression.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 1.

women, from aggressive, sexually promiscuous African American males, who were freed after the Civil War. In essence, it is similar to Nazi Germany's *Triumph of the Will*, where the National Socialists are depicted as strong, proud, and good leaders that will bring glory to Germany once more. Both films are merely propaganda. The Klan's third iteration spawned in the middle of the Civil Rights era between the 1950s and 1960s. Their most infamous act at the time was the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, which killed four African American girls. A century after its creation the Klan still had a large influence in American politics. Although the organization has since declined in membership, they are still around today, carrying the Confederacy's legacy with them.

While some of these organizations have disappeared, the Klan and new organizations, such as the "Alt-Right" Neo-Nazis, continue their work. In 2015, former Grand Wizard of the Klan, David Duke, endorsed Donald Trump for president. In an early 2016 interview with CNN journalist Jake Tapper, when asked about Duke endorsing him, Donald Trump responded, "I have to look at the group. I mean, I don't know what group you're talking about. You wouldn't want me to condemn a group that I know nothing about. I'd have to look. If you would send me a list of the groups, I will do research on them and certainly I would disavow if I thought there was something wrong. You may have groups in there that are totally fine- it would be very unfair. So give me a list of the groups and I'll let you know." Tapper incredulously remarks "Ok. I'm just talking about David Duke and the Ku Klux Klan here, but-" Trump interrupts, "Honestly, I don't know David Duke. I don't believe I've ever met him. I'm pretty sure I didn't meet him. And I just don't know anything about him."¹³³ First, Trump is notoriously a serial liar, with the *Washington Post* reporting that, as of January 20, 2020, he has made 16,421 false claims in the

¹³³ Matthew Yglesias, "Donald Trump declines to disavow David Duke and the KKK," *Vox*, February 28, 2016, <https://bit.ly/37b8dIn>.

first three years of his presidency.¹³⁴ Second, it is highly unlikely that a person would not be familiar with the Ku Klux Klan, if not Duke, especially when Trump was 70 during this interview. Duke voted for Trump in 2016 and remains a loyal supporter, “insisting that the president-elect’s policies line up with the former KKK leader’s vision for America.”¹³⁵ If this weren’t enough, after the 2016 election, “Alt-Right” Neo-Nazi leader Richard Spencer, at the National Policy Institute conference, enthusiastically praises Trump. “Hail Trump! Hail our people, hail our victory,” he yelled. Several people in the crowd threw their hands up in the Nazi salute.¹³⁶ Neo-Nazis are hailing Trump like they would hail Hitler. The Klan and the latest Neo-Nazi organizations exalt Trump the same way they exalt Confederate leaders.

Confederate monuments and the Confederate battle flag have always been controversial, but have taken especially harsh criticism in the twenty-first century. On June 17, 2015, white supremacist Dylan Roof entered a black church in Charleston, South Carolina and shot and killed nine African American in attendance.¹³⁷ His motivation was to start a race war. Several photos that he is in are with Confederate flags, including one at the Museum and Library of Confederate History in South Carolina.¹³⁸ At the time, South Carolina had the Confederate battle flag flying in their state capital. They subsequently removed the flag, but there was one neo-Confederate organization, the South Carolina Secessionist Party (that supports South Carolina seceding from the union again), that held a memorial of the flag being taken down the following three years.

¹³⁴ Glenn Kessler, Salvador Rizzo, and Meg Kelly, “President Trump made 16,241 false or misleading claims in his first three years,” *Washington Post*, January 20, 2020, <https://wapo.st/2VGdMfR>.

¹³⁵ Libby Nelson, “‘Why we voted for Donald Trump’: David Duke explains the white supremacist Charlottesville protests,” *Vox*, August 12, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2tH0fJl>.

¹³⁶ The Atlantic, “‘Hail Trump!’: Richard Spencer Speech Excerpts, Youtube, November 21, 2016, <https://bit.ly/379mc19>.

¹³⁷ Jason Horowitz, Nick Corasaniti, and Ashley Southall, “Nine Killed in Shooting at Black Church in Charleston,” *New York Times*, June 17, 2015, <https://nyti.ms/2S9D4Rd>.

¹³⁸ Matt Zapotosky, “Charleston church shooter: ‘I would like to make it crystal clear, I do not regret what I did’,” *Washington Post*, January 4, 2017, <https://wapo.st/31AnUHG>.

The organization recently disbanded, however, because the leader said ““the people genuinely interested in the history are less in number than people who are blatant and racist homophobes.””¹³⁹

Even with one organization disbanding for ironic reasons, still continue to support the public display of Confederate memorabilia. A poll conducted by Winthrop University revealed that 40 percent of Southerners “believe that ‘White people are currently under attack in this country,’” and 48 percent still see the Confederate flag favorably.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, the Council of Conservative Citizens, founded in 1985 (but traces back to the 1950s “White Citizens’ Council”), and the League of the South, founded in 1994, continue the fight for Confederate memorials. Both organizations have staunchly defended the Confederacy’s purpose (white supremacy and slavery), but also espout racist rhetoric of their own. These two organizations would later go on and infiltrate the Sons of Confederate Veterans in the twenty-first century. Heidi Beirich writes that both wanted “to infiltrate the SCV and move it toward their own positions,” and did so by targeting “a conservative group of men with deep nostalgia for the antebellum South and defensiveness for ‘The Cause’ and its symbols.” By 2004, the Sons of Confederate Veterans was taken over by these radicals. White supremacist lawyer Kirk Lyons wrote an email to the SCV mailing list, saying that ““mere Klan membership should not be sufficient to remove a member.” That same year, the Sons denounced ““racial and political extremists,”” specifically targeting the National Association for the Advancement of Colored

¹³⁹ Sam Spence, “Overrun by ‘racist homophobes,’ the S.C. Secessionist Party is breaking up, leader says,” *Charleston City Paper*, January 28, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2SbrRzq>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., <https://bit.ly/2SbrRzq>.

People (NAACP) and Jesse Jackson.¹⁴¹ Indeed, the Sons started as a Confederate memorial group and has morphed into a white supremacist one.

I leave on one last point: it should fill everyone with consternation that the definitions of fascism used applied to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. None of these terms were used to describe the United States. What we see is a stunning parallel between the post-Civil War South and post-World War I Italy and Germany. They were all countries that fought a gruesome war and lost, reduced to ruins, with their pride and way of life shattered. Consequently, veterans of the war banded together to revive their fallen countries and expand them beyond their original borders to further their cause. Before the Third Reich in Germany, however, the United States had already committed a genocide against the Native Americans. Adolf Hitler viewed this with approval, writing that “white settlers in America ‘had gunned down the millions of redskins to a few hundred thousand.’”¹⁴² James Q. Whitman has already written a whole book talking about how Nazi Germany took inspiration from the United States’ Jim Crow and eugenics studies, titled *Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law*.¹⁴³ Twentieth-century fascism, as we know it, was present decades before its official adoption by Benito Mussolini in Italy, simply in another culture.

¹⁴¹ Heidi Beirich, “The Struggle for the Sons of Confederate Veterans: A Return to White Supremacy in the Early Twenty-First Century?,” in *Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Euan Hague, Heidi Beirich, and Edward H. Sebasta (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 280-282.

¹⁴² Alex Ross, “How American Racism Influenced Hitler,” *New Yorker*, April 23, 2018, <https://bit.ly/37bXfSI>.

¹⁴³ James Q. Whitman, *Hitler’s American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017).

Coda

Fascism and Trump: Why Now?

Fascism normally only appears after a country has fallen into destitution, but Donald Trump has come at a time when the United States is *not* in either economic nor martial jeopardy. Indeed, the country was steady and, arguably, improving under President Barack Obama. What can explain his sudden rise? If it was not the 2008 recession, since the country chose Obama in the 2008 and 2012 election, what crisis presented itself as such a threat to a large portion of the American population that they chose a fascist leader? To answer these questions, we must look at what brought Trump into the political limelight. Additionally, analyzing his rhetoric from his candidacy announcement and inauguration shows that he used similar language that was part of the rhetoric of American fascism.

While there are many points that we can start with in Trump's political rise, I will begin with his peddling of the conspiracy theory that President Obama was not a U.S. citizen because he was born in Kenya, and thus was not constitutionally eligible to be president. Before Trump became the face of the birther conspiracy, a February 2011 *Politico* poll found that 51% of Republican primary voters believed that Obama was not born in the United States, with only 28% saying he was born here, and 21% saying they were "not sure."¹⁴⁴ A month later, Trump became the primary voice for the whole movement. On March 23, 2011, in an interview on ABC's *The View*, Trump declared, "I want him [President Obama] to show his birth certificate! I want him to show his birth certificate! There's something on that birth certificate that he doesn't like."¹⁴⁵ A week later, on Fox News' *O'Reilly Factor*, responding to a question as to why he

¹⁴⁴ Andy Barr, "51% of GOP voters: Obama foreign," *Politico*, February 15, 2011, <https://www.politico.com/story/2011/02/51-of-gop-voters-obama-foreign-049554>.

¹⁴⁵ "Donald Trump on The View 03/23/2011 Trump Wants to See Obama's Birth Certificate," YouTube, published on March 25, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emkDpm_vQDg.

cared about the birth certificate, Trump responded, "...if you are going to be the President of the United States, you have to be born in this country, and there is a doubt as to whether or not he was born." (He finished the sentence at "born.") He continued, "people have birth certificates, he doesn't have a birth certificate - now, he may have one, but there's something on that birth certificate maybe religion, maybe it says he's a Muslim, I don't know. Maybe he doesn't want that, or he may not have one, but I will tell you this, if he wasn't born in this country, it's one of the great scams of all time."¹⁴⁶ No other president in history has been questioned about where they were born, but because Obama is African American, many white Americans, including Trump, were skeptical. It boils down to racism: the belief that African Americans cannot assume powerful positions without cheating the system. This racism connects to the deeper issue of fascism, since the ideology requires a targeted minority to be the scapegoat of American fears.

In fact, Trump's rhetoric mirrors all three definitions of fascism used in this paper. We see this in both his presidential candidacy announcement on June 16, 2015 and in his inaugural address on January 20, 2017. First, his campaign announcement is loaded with the obsession of American decline. Trump starts his speech with, "our country is in serious trouble. We don't have victories anymore. We used to have victories, but we don't have them. When was the last time anybody saw us beating, let's say, China in a trade deal? They kill us. I beat China all the time. All the time." He continues, "our enemies are getting stronger and stronger by the way, and we as a country are getting weaker. Even our nuclear arsenal doesn't work." Regardless of the fact that none of these things are true, the cry of American victimization is loud and clear. To

¹⁴⁶ Fox News, "VIDEO: O'Reilly Challenges Trump on His Views on Obama's Birth Certificate," Fox News Insider, published on March 31, 2011, <https://youtu.be/HQFbVWHnzp0?t=218>.

punctuate his point, he concludes the whole speech, despairing: “sadly, the American dream is dead.”¹⁴⁷ This last statement was Trump’s categorical assumption of America in 2015.

Second, his speech constantly calls for the rebirth of American exceptionalism. He argues, “we need a leader that can bring back our jobs, can bring back our manufacturing, can bring back our military, can take care of our vets. Our vets have been abandoned. And we also need a cheerleader.” It is important to note that at this point in American history, the United States military was, and still is, the largest and most powerful on the planet; there is nothing to “bring back.” He continues, “we need somebody that can take the brand of the United States and make it great again. It’s not great again. We need - we need somebody - we need somebody that literally will take this country and make it great again. We can do that.” Trump’s presidential slogan, “Make America Great Again,” neatly fits into the *palingenetic ultranationalist* rhetoric. Part of Trump’s apocalyptic fearmongering was that the United States was not wealthy enough. He claims, “there is so much wealth out there that can make our country so rich again, and therefore make it great again. Because we need money. We’re dying. We’re dying. We need money. We have to do it. And we need the right people.”¹⁴⁸ Such rhetoric about reviving America is *palingenetic*, and the calls for increasing wealth, presumably from the global market, is *ultranationalist*, since it calls for American profits to expand well beyond its borders and reap the benefits of the global market.

Finally, Trump exalts the extraordinary leader, *himself*, who can accomplish making America “great again.” After officially announcing his candidacy, he boasts, “I will be the greatest jobs president that God ever created. I tell you that. I’ll bring back our jobs from China,

¹⁴⁷ Time Staff, “Here’s Donald Trump’s Presidential Announcement Speech,” *Time Magazine*, June 16, 2015, <https://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/>.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., <https://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/>.

from Mexico, from Japan, from so many places. I'll bring back our jobs, and I'll bring back our money." Regarding his ability to run the country, he childishly brags that, "...one of the early things I would do, probably before I even got in - and I wouldn't even use - you know, I have - I know the smartest negotiators in the world. I know the good ones. I know the bad ones. I know the overrated ones." Aside from Trump's tendency to ramble, we can recognize his claims to have every answer America needs to rebuild itself, including the country's infrastructure, in which "nobody can do that like me. Believe me." Concerning his foreign policies, such as the border between Mexico and the United States, he introduces his hallmark platform: "I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively, I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words." To emphasize his greatness as an international negotiator, he boasts that "nobody will be tougher on ISIS than Donald Trump. Nobody." It is telling that he referred to himself in the third person. Finally, after calling the American dream dead, he declares, "but if I get elected president I will bring it back bigger and better and stronger than ever before, and we will make America great again."¹⁴⁹

Trump's rhetoric did not change after he won the 2016 election. In his inauguration speech, he echoes the cries of American destitution and a need for a rebirth of the country:

...for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an uneducated system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young an beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crimes and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential. This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., <https://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/>.

In actuality, by the time Trump gave this speech, the American market was growing. In addition to the economic ruin that he describes, the last line, referring to “American carnage,” is exactly the type of victimized language used by white supremacist terrorists and fascism. In fact, his call for a rebirth of the country is emphasized near the end of the speech: “together, We Will Make America Strong Again. We Will Make America Wealthy Again. We Will Make America Proud Again. We Will Make America Safe Again. And, Yes, Together, We Will Make America Great Again.”¹⁵⁰ The repeated use of the word “again” implies that before his election, America was not strong, wealthy, proud, safe, or great. It is Trump’s victory, however, that will bring these lost ideals back to the country, aligning itself with *palingenetic ultranationalism*. We can imagine that the absence of Trump’s self-exaltation as an extraordinary leader in the speech was because his two advisors at the time, white supremacists Steven Bannon and Stephen Miller, wrote it, and so Trump was not allowed to ad lib.¹⁵¹

Trump’s “American carnage” was President Barack Obama. Beginning with his consternation about a black man in the White House, the circulation of the birther conspiracy theory, and Obama’s 2012 reelection, Trump was primed to be the new great leader. For years he openly attacked Obama in every facet, especially espousing racial and religious conspiracies that Obama was Kenyan Muslim. This played into America’s long history of racial animosity, and it was only sensible that a terrified white population would latch onto a belligerent, angry, and shamelessly racist strongman. Like all fascists, Trump boiled it down to race. He was merely the electoral reaction to a broken white hegemony.

¹⁵⁰ “The Inaugural Address,” Remarks, White House, last modified January 20, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/the-inaugural-address/>

¹⁵¹ Michael C. Bender., “Donald Trump Strikes Nationalistic Tone in Inaugural Speech,” *Walls Street Journal*, January 20, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/donald-trump-strikes-nationalistic-tone-in-inaugural-speech-1484957527>.

Appendix A

Other scholars provide other aspects of fascism beyond Griffin's and Arendt's definition that cannot be ignored. Historian Renzo de Felice notes the typology of forms of power in fascism. In short, he writes that fascism contains the exaltation of extraordinary personalities (elites and supermen) and the myth of the "leader," a single-party system with complete control of media and enforced by a police regime, verbal revolutionarism coupled with substantial conservatism and alleviated by social concessions of a welfare nature, creation of a new class for expression of the party, creation and improvement of a strong military, and an economic system that places capitalists in high power and the promotion of autarky.¹⁵² De Felice focuses more on the structural aspects of a fascist regime rather than the political or spiritual aspect like Griffin, but this does not make his definition any less important. Historian Zeev Sternhell characterizes fascism as "a synthesis of organic nationalism and anti-Marxist socialism, a revolutionary idea based on a simultaneous rejection of liberalism, Marxism, and democracy."¹⁵³ Sternhell takes on a more negation approach to define fascism, interpreting it as more reactionary to other elements rather than having a substantial platform itself. This negation can be found when reading any documents from Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany. Political scientist Robert O. Paxton defines fascism as

a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Renzo de Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism*, trans. Brenda Huff Everett (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977), 12.

¹⁵³ Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Left nor Right*, trans. David Maisel (California: University of California Press, 1986), 27.

¹⁵⁴ Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (United States: Vintage Books, 2004): 218.

Paxton blends a cultural aspect of fascism with its political, providing another essential face of fascism. While I am not focusing on what makes a state fascist, it is still important to understand the larger picture of what makes a state fascist beyond two terms.

Appendix B

Scholars have defined nationalism differently through various lenses and they all remark how diverse the definitions have become. Sociologists Bart Bonikowski and Paul DiMaggio use their own field and political psychology to define nationalism. Sociologists define nationalism as an ideology “mobilized by political elites: ‘a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.’” In short, politicians use nationalism to harmoniously push political and national causes. Political psychologists define nationalism as “‘a perception of national superiority and an orientation towards national dominance.’”¹⁵⁵ According to these definitions, speaking for their discipline of sociology, the way that Bonikowski and DiMaggio have defined nationalism forgets two important aspects. First, their definition encompasses all political action, but not all political action is nationalist. Second, they do not take into consideration that nationalism requires a sense of superiority. This is why the psychological definition is more accurate. To further this point, political psychologist Markus Kemmelmeier and psychologist David G. Winter defines nationalism as “an ideology of the ingroup over outgroups and implies the exclusion or even domination of others.”¹⁵⁶ Not all psychologists fit into the same mold, however. Psychologist Karl Umbrasas splits his definition into two categories: constructed nationalism and discovered nationalism. The former he defines as “a political organization [that] seeks commitment to its institutions and ideology” and is “top-down in organization,” similar to that of Bonikowski and DiMaggio’s sociological definition. The latter he defines as a “‘romantic return to the national past’ (Winks and Neuberger, 58).”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Bonikowski and Paul DiMaggio, “Varieties of American Popular Nationalism,” *American Sociological Review* 81, no. 5 (October 2016): 952, <https://bit.ly/2M7DCmo>.

¹⁵⁶ Kemmelmeier and David G. Winter, “Sowing Patriotism, but Reaping Nationalism? Consequences of Exposure to the American Flag,” *Political Psychology* 29, no. 6 (December 2008): 863, <https://bit.ly/2V7I5tu>.

¹⁵⁷ Karl Umbrasas, “Psychopolitics of the Current Nationalism,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 10, no. 4 (2017): 34, <https://bit.ly/2LJSNDm>.

While discovered nationalism diverges from previous definitions, nationalism does contain elements of wanting to return a country to a glorified past. His constructed nationalism definition contains the same flaws of Bonikowski and DeMaggio's sociological definition has.

Psychologists are not the only ones who define nationalism with a sense of superiority, however. Historian Edward Pessen defines nationalism as an "exaltation of the nation, if not necessarily as the highest good, then as a transcendent [sic] good, a cause at least the equal of any other, superior by far to most."¹⁵⁸ With the help of psychologists defining nationalism, it allows us to historically understand that, at its core, nineteenth-century American nationalism meant superiority over others.

Although other definitions have aspects that are applicable, they fall short in terms of nationalism's broader scope. First, historian Paul Quigley, in the context of studying the Confederacy during the Civil War, defines nationalism as "the modern notion that a given group of people, constituting a nation, ought to govern itself in a sovereign state." Even in this context, Quigley forgets that nationalist rhetoric and actions can and have occurred in regions where a group of people already have political independence in a sovereign state, such as in the Union during the Civil War and the United States as a whole before and after the war. Second, political scientist Minxin Pei defines American nationalism in three ways. First, as a creed, or "based on political ideals, not those of cultural or ethnic superiority," however he does mention that "...in American eyes, the superiority of that creed is self-evident." Second, he argues that "American nationalism is triumphant rather than aggrieved." Third, he argues that "American nationalism is forward looking, while nationalism in most other countries is the reverse."¹⁵⁹ These three aspects

¹⁵⁸ Edward Pessen, "American Nationalism and American Historians," *OAH Magazine of History* 2, no. 4 (Fall 1987): 4, <https://bit.ly/2Ogelco>.

¹⁵⁹ Minxin Pei, "The Paradoxes of American Nationalism," *Foreign Policy*, no. 136 (May-June 2003): 34, <https://bit.ly/2VbPeJg>.

of American nationalism, he argues, are not based on based on cultural or ethnic superiority, but he then proceeds to mention how Americans believe that their “creed” is superior to others. This contradictory statement undermines his initial argument and reinforces the notion that nationalism maintains superiority over other cultures. Finally, political scientist Gustavo de las Casas defines nationalism as “a sense of collective unity that turns large groups into extended families.”¹⁶⁰ His definition conflates *patriotism* with *nationalism*. Scholars have been careful to note how these two terms have been used interchangeably and how there has been careful work done to separate them, as Bonikowski and DiMaggio have pointed out in their article. They state, “some describe ‘nationalism’ as ‘patriotism’s’ invidious evil twin, defining the former as ‘a perception of national superiority and an orientation toward national dominance’ and the latter as ‘a deeply felt affective attachment to the nation.’”¹⁶¹ Patriotism is an emotional feeling towards a nation while nationalism involves itself in political action based on its ideology.

Quigley and Pei do have feasible parts to their arguments. Quigley asserts that “nationalism is at its clearest when a person or group follows the concept to its *logical conclusion* (emphasis mine), deciding that their nation is so deserving of political independence that they must pursue that independence by any means necessary, regardless of the obstacles.”¹⁶² What he means is many nationalist movements in history have had violent episodes when pursuing their goals, including manifest destiny and forcibly relocating large groups of indigenous populations. Pei’s argument on how American nationalism is both triumphant and forward looking compared to its European counterparts fits nicely within the context of manifest

¹⁶⁰ Gustavo de las Casas, “Is Nationalism Good for You?,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 165 (March-April 2008): 53, <https://bit.ly/30EFqIZ>

¹⁶¹ Bonikowski and DiMaggio, “Varieties of American Nationalism,” 952.

¹⁶² Paul Quigley, *Shifting Grounds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): 11.

destiny, where most of the language used at the time centered itself on progress towards the future, physically, through the conquest land.

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